

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."—SHAKESPEARE.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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NEVER FORGOTTEN.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER XL. CASE AGAINST MAJOR CARTER.

WHILE the hubbub goes on, and people are asking each other in streets and clubs, "I say, what's this business about Carter?" we may look back some weeks to that stormy night at Bangor, when young Doctor Jones was away, and Miss Manuel, like an avenging angel, was sitting before the old man, who was crouching in his chair. She literally wrung the whole story from him in bits and patches.

First, he recollects Major Carter, with his wife, coming to the place, and had seen them walking about very often. How she, he had noticed, was so quiet and white, and always had her timid eye fixed on the major, as if expecting something. Her voice was gentle, and she feared her husband. The major very often, said the old man, came into the shop, and talked, and talked pleasantly too, but not so much to him. It was delightful to listen to him; he knew the world so well. He was above them all in this place—miles above them.

The old man's son had just then come home, and had begun to help in the business; and the major fancied him a good deal more than his father. *His* reverence for the major far exceeded that of the old man's. "He can do anything, that man," he often said to his father. "He could be prime minister. He can turn you and me round his finger. We are mere babies to him." As indeed they were. And with Dr. Watkyn, Major Carter sometimes took a walk, though in a private direction, for he was careful, and saving of his dignity. And young Dr. Watkyn was heard to say often, that he would to Heaven that man could stay for years in the place. His words were like gold.

Presently, Mrs. Carter, always ailing, began to become ill regularly, and the major became changed into the most devoted of nurses.

"I was brought to see her," said the old man, "and my son was brought too. And I will confess that, being accustomed only to the plain, intelligible sicknesses of our rough country people, and my son having much the same sort of experience, we could not make much of the matter.

The major had all the feeling in the world, and tried to help us as well as he could; but what could be made of a lady who was wasting and wasting, and growing sick, and then growing well, and then wasting again? We could only call it consumption. At last, on one Sunday night, when we had been at meeting—Must I tell you?"

Miss Manuel, with her eyes on the coals, said, impassively, "Go on."

Those Welsh coals, long undermined like a little quarry, suddenly crumbled down and made him start. "Go on," she said again. "Finish."

"Ah, begin, you should say," he replied, "for it is all to come yet. That night I had been rummaging among our old jars and drugs, looking for some calomel, and found, as you have often found, perhaps, a heap of things that I had no idea I had. As I was rummaging and dusting, the major came in and sat down despondingly upon a chair. 'Worse to-night, Jones,' he said. 'Only think, the faithful partner, who has held to me, come weal, come woe, for so many years.'

"At this moment, a neighbour came in with a long story about his wife, Jenkin, who was lying ill, and could get no sleep at night from a herd of cats who had their meetings at the back of his house. 'Give me some poison, doctor,' he said.

"I recollect finding among the other things a little strychnine, which got there I don't know how. I gave him some, and went out to the door with him to talk over the state of his wife, leaving the major behind leaning his head on his hand."

Miss Manuel slowly turned her face away from the coals, and was looking eagerly at him.

"I only say this," said the old man, looking restlessly from side to side. "Two days later, the neighbour came back for more of the poison, which had done good work, and I never could find it. Even that night I missed one of the bottles, but I did not know it was *that* one. When the neighbour came again, and I could not find it, something whispered me that the major had taken it. It seemed unjust—unreasonable—wicked; but the idea took possession of me."

The wind, long kept waiting, was now thundering at the old bow-window, as if it had suddenly found a shoulder, and was driving furiously with that shoulder against the door.

The old man shrank away in terror, and stopped for a moment.

"The neighbour came pretty often—for he was anxious about his wife—to see if I had found it, and came often, too, when the major was sitting in the parlour. 'What a fuss,' he said one day, in a pet, 'about that wretched stuff. I never come in here but you are harping on it. Give that fellow something else, and have done with him.'

"'Well,' said I, 'major, it was very odd the way it disappeared.'

"'Very odd?' he said, impatiently; 'in this wild nest of confusion, it is a wonder you can find anything.'

"My son had to go up to the major's wife the next night, who was very ill indeed, in something like catalepsy. 'A new shape, father,' he said to me, when he came home. 'That woman is running the round of every sickness in the Clinical Medicine. I can make nothing of her. There she is, now chattering and trembling, and her spine going like a pendulum—'"

"What idle stuff this is," said Miss Manuel, suddenly. "All foolish dreams! And this is your story? You mislay a dusty old bottle, and you talk of poisoning! A nightmare."

"Ah! I wish it were," said he, crooning the words out sorrowfully. "But my son, a week later, searching in a cupboard in her room when the major had gone down, found the very bottle (for it had a special make)—I wish that had been a nightmare!"

Again Miss Manuel's eyes sparkled with interest. She said, "You know something more."

"Ay," said he, "and that she herself told us. That is her scared looks at him. Never for a single moment—and this I remarked—did he allow any one to be in the room with her without being there himself. He was on guard always. Once she half whispered to me, 'For God's sake send me no more' (drugs, she meant), 'they are killing me;' and that moment he came with some cooling drink for her.

"No, no! no more," she said, half rising up in her bed. "I will have nothing else. Ask these doctors. I shall die soon; but not by—"

"Hush, hush!" said the major, laying his hand on her shoulder. "This is for your good, dear. You *must* take the things. Look! I should ask nothing better myself." And he drank some of it with relish, and with his eyes fixed upon her. She hung down her head and took it silently. "Ah," he said, with a sigh, "some way we two have never understood each other through our lives, and never will. It is too late, I fear, now." I believed in the major that night.

"Two nights after, Mrs. Carter died. They came running for me (I was stronger than I am now) about eleven o'clock, and I went up. She was shaking and chattering with her teeth clenched, and the major and his son holding her by the wrists. I never heard such shrieks and such signs of agony. Her eyes were starting out of her head. But we could do nothing. Towards morning she got quiet, and by six, when

one of those spasms was coming on again, went off with a shriek, and a sort of jump into the air.

"Two days after she was buried, the major came to me in my parlour. He was in deep grief, and wanted a certificate of her death, and the cause of her death. It was a matter of form. I was very silent, and, I suppose, suspicious. 'Why do you want this?' I said.

"'As a matter of form,' he said. 'I must look to these things for the sake of my son. It is odious to me at this time, when I should be at the grave of my wife; but some one must look to these things. We must have this, to get some little property to which she is entitled.'

"'How?' I said. 'Through a will?'

"'O, that is no matter,' he said, shortly. 'All I want is the formal paper, just to satisfy those insurance people.'

"I started up. "O, it was an insurance, then? Ah, Major Carter!"

"He stamped his foot. "What do you mean?" he said, turning on me. "Take care! No tricks of this sort. I warn you it will be dangerous trying them with me."

"But I don't know," I said (he had quite scared me), "what I am to sign. I know *no* cause of death. It seems all mysterious."

"Then," said he, promptly, "try your post mortem. Look for yourselves, both of you. I give full permission. If you doubt your own skill in these matters, get some one else that *has* skill, and I will pay. What is it you are at?"

"My son here came in, and Major Carter addressed him.

"What is this humour your father has got into?" he said. "I can't follow him. He is hesitating about giving the plain formal thing always given. God knows I have trouble enough without having old men's scruples to remove. See to it, Watkyn, do. I am tired and sick."

"I am weak, I am afraid, but my son spoke with me, and reasoned with me, and showed me what he thought was the folly of these scruples. Later, too, when the major's cold eye fell upon me, it quite scared me. That night he came back when my son had just gone out, stayed exactly a minute, but during that minute fixed that dreadful eye upon me, and said, coldly and distinctly, 'Mind what you are about, and take a friendly hint. I have crushed many as obscure, as an obscure country doctor. Take care I don't stamp you under my foot. Be wise,' and he threw the paper down on the table; 'make up your weak mind before the night is over!'

"Well, I signed that night, and—and have had a weight upon my conscience ever since. It has put ten years to my sixty years, and has made me decrepit and miserable. These stormy nights, which come so often, make me tremble. Listen! There it goes; and I often think, if I was to be called away in one of these wild hurricanes—what—"

For more than an hour he sat and cowered under Miss Manuel's eye, sometimes shrinking

away in alarm, and stopping short in what he was telling; refusing, in abject terror, to say more. Then would come a burst of the wind and a sudden howl from the storm outside, and he would shrink and fling his head into the cushions of his chair, as if it were the earth. When he looked up again, he would see the calm face of Miss Manuel opposite to him, like a judgment. He was driven on. When all he had to tell had been wrung from him, one of the wild hurricanes came down the street, and brought with it the clatter and the roar and the metallic jingling of dislodged slates cantering down the street on their edge. With it, too, came the sound of horse's feet and of wheels, which stopped suddenly at the door. Then there were voices. The old man was on his feet in an agony of terror.

"It is a judgment on me," he said. "He is come again, and he will tell that man, and I shall be destroyed. Go! go quick! leave me here. O, if he should find you——"

"Hush!" said Miss Manuel. "You may trust me. No one shall know a word, nor even the whisper of a word." And she had flown to the door, and was up-stairs in her room in a second.

It was the son come home. The eminent country doctor had by some accident been beforehand with him. The pink Welshman was soured. He started when he saw his father at the door. "Not in bed!" he said, roughly. "What work is this? What have you been at? Come!"

The old man quavered out some excuse about having fallen asleep. But the son was suspicious, with the suspicion, too, of ill humour, and went away lowering at the pale and trembling father. But he was yet more suspicious when Miss Manuel announced that she was going away, and took an early train to London. Most joyful was the maid in whose service she was.

Later, Mr. Speedy, and, later still, the Crown solicitors came to gather up yet further details. They groped and ferreted here and there, but they found the scent had grown cold. There were terrible gaps, and a dozen links wanting here and there, and no dexterity of the legal whitesmith could join them. Still, there was "a fair case" to go to a jury on—a case handsomely suspicious. Then misfortunes came thickly. Old Doctor Jones died suddenly; and though his testimony, such as it was, was forthcoming in another shape, still it would not have such an effect "with the jury." An eminent *Nisi Prius* advocate had been secured for the prisoner, who would "knock to pieces" the "wretched case for the Crown," made up, as it was, of "old medicine bottles," and of the damaged capacities of a miserable old dotard, who "crooned" all day and night over a fire, and who, his neighbours would show, had not been in his right mind for years. Claysop, M.P., "in his place" in the House, put a question to the Home Secretary, and threatened to move for papers and correspondence, and the Home Secretary said he would communicate with

the legal advisers of the Crown. In various newspapers there were articles headed "Major Carter's Case." It was taken up so warmly, and every day grew so weak, that presently all proceedings were dropped. It was spoken of by Major Carter's "friends" as "a conspiracy." But Mr. Speedy and the insurance office kept him at bay; and certainly Major Carter—who was seen very often on the Continent afterwards with his wife and son—never attempted to enforce his claim by process of law.

CHAPTER XLII. THE "MODERATES' CLUB."

The town still talked for some days of this "painful" business, and a morning penny journal had a gaudy leading article, worked in all the rich colours of word painting. At the Moderates' Club, Sir Hopkins Pocock, now become faintly querulous, and with a grievance in his pocket which he took out to show to every one that he met, acquired some little importance by his patent rights in previous portions of the major's history. "I knew all about him; I know all about him," he said, pushing himself into a knot of Moderates. "Bless you! there was a very curious business at Monaco, long ago. I never told of it before; but *now*—" And then Sir Hopkins began a calumnious little history about a bill, and the clergyman of the place's son, who was only fourteen, sir, and looked twelve ("quite a child! O, it was very bad!"); by reason of which adventure the major had to hurry away precipitately from the place. Into which little story, however, he managed to introduce so many ingenious references to his own hard condition, and to the cruel way in which his public services had been acknowledged, that the more youthful Moderates yawned in his face, and, going away, told other Moderates that "Old Pocock was at it again."

To this society belonged Romaine and Fermor, and many more of the same standing. It was a little select, more fashionable than political, and to Romaine's exertions, Fermor had indeed owed his entrance. This obligation—with some more of the same social cast—he was now carrying about like a coal of fire on his head. On this night Fermor was dining by himself at a lonely table, full of bitterness. The club joint was tasteless to him; for, close by, with his back to him, was Romaine with three others dining in great spirits, and Romaine, more sarcastic, boisterous, noisy, and even insolent, than usual. Old gentlemen, busy with their newspapers, protested with fierce looks against his merriment. They were talking of the wedding.

"I knew it all along," said Romaine, in a noisy burst. "I told every man I met it would come to a business. Ask Wallis! And yet a good fellow! I am sorry for him, I am indeed. He was always civil to me. I believe it is a conspiracy; or, if it's not, it's all one. I like him the better for it. I wish all the old wives in the world could be got rid of in the same way. I do,

on my soul! But he had enemies—dozens of them. I have reason to know it."

"Tell us about it, Romaine," said some of the others. "Do now."

"O, it will all come out by-and-by," said he. "They want to turn him into a felon. I suspect a certain lady-friend of ours to be at the bottom of it; one of your fine flashing Judith-and-Holofernes pattern."

"Bet you a sovereign I name her," said a man opposite him. "Alfred-place! eh?"

"Keep your sovereign for your tailor, my friend," said Romaine, contemptuously. "For a wonder, you have made a guess. You all know," he said, dropping his voice, "that Miss Manuel! She has done the thing, I'll swear! I know her touch! It's so shabby, and so like a woman: all about a sister of hers."

"She is a fine woman, though," said the "man" who had offered the sovereign.

"Fine woman!" said Romaine, with disgust. "I hate to hear fellows talk in that way, as if they were speaking of joints of meat. Fine or not fine, I dislike her. She is dangerous and spiteful. I recommend all here to keep clear of her."

Fermor listened, and heard all this with tingling cheeks. Her name to be bandied about in this low way in a public room, before waiters and "men!" Long he had been watching for an opportunity of some quarrel with Romaine; some reasonable opening, when he could "put him down." It seemed to be now hurrying on.

Romaine had turned suddenly, and had seen Fermor. "O, ho!" he said; "we must mind what we say. How do de, Fermor? He is one of her sacred band. Don't denounce us, Fermor."

There were a dozen feet between Fermor and the others. Over such a space he could not bring himself to hurl back the retort he wished; so he made no answer. The other gave a significant glance at his fellows. He was rampant with mischief and spirits. "I can't understand," he went on, "such thing in nature as strong-brained single women who can go about like single men. I should like to have it explained to me. The idea of having a club at one's house, and taking in all the men of the town! You talk of a fine woman! now, I like something petite—something pretty, and soft, and dainty," and he looked over at Fermor. The "men" laughed, and Fermor thought it was because they knew to what Romaine was alluding. He would have given the world to have grappled with him on the spot; but he did not know how to begin.

Presently Romaine and his men went away noisily to the smoking-room, and then to the billiard-room. Fermor got up promptly, and followed them. He never took his eyes off Romaine. The other seemed to understand him perfectly, and, as he smoked and played, kept up a running fire of strokes at him all the night; "nagging," it would be called in popular slang. Young Brett presently dropped in, and looked on.

"That's the style," said Romaine, pocketing

a ball with extraordinary violence. "Look at that, Fermor! That's the way I treat any man, woman, or child, that interferes with my play. Pocket them, eh?"

He looked at Fermor insolently as he walked past him to make a fresh stroke.

"Let them get out of my way, I warn them. There again!" and he executed a vindictive cannon. "I say, now, Brett, we'll call the white ball Fermor. There he goes. Pocket again." And he walked round once more. "Red ball. Now, Fermor, you know who the red ball is for. There she goes. No; not quite, this time!" He missed his stroke.

Fermor sat on the benches with compressed lips. He was waiting till the room cleared a little more. There were only half a dozen men there.

HOW TO RECRUIT THE ENGLISH ARMY.

CERTAIN circumstances had allowed me some years ago to show kindness to a French officer when he was sick in a foreign land, and he wished to return my hospitality. I wished much to see something of the interior life of a French regiment; and, like all who take an interest in our own service, I had for some time past watched the gradual falling off in the number of recruits for the English army, and had certain theories of my own which I wanted to test by the working of the conscription system in France. I therefore accepted the invitation.

In the French army it is not customary for all the officers of a corps to dine together. What in our service is called the mess, has of late years been introduced into the Imperial Guard by the Emperor, but the system is not found to work well. In the line, the custom is for the unmarried field-officers to dine together at some pension, or hotel, where a table d'hôte is kept up for their exclusive use at a fixed hour every day. In like manner the captains of the regiment dine together at another pension, whilst the subalterns have a third—generally the best, because the members are the most numerous—table for themselves, which is quite apart from their brother-officers. My friend being a captain in the regiment, I every day breakfasted and dined with him at the pension where he and his eighteen or twenty brother-captains had their meals. We had our déjeuner à la fourchette every morning at nine, and our dinner at five. For this feeding—and I defy any man of moderate means to have two better meals—each officer who sat down to table paid the sum of sixty francs a month, or about one shilling and eightpence sterling a day. I often contrasted this amount with what my own mess bills used to be in the English army, when my month's pay was barely enough to meet the expenses of eating and drinking a not very well cooked dinner and a little fiery wine, without taking into consideration the cost of breakfast in my own room. For these sixty francs a month, the French officers had

every expense of table provided, the only extra being a subscription, which was perfectly voluntary, of two francs each per month, which formed a small fund by which a few bottles of champagne were provided on extra occasions, such as a stranger like myself joining their pension for the first time. After dinner we generally resorted to a café, where officers of different ranks met together every evening to read the papers, smoke cigars, play dominoes or chess, or sip their coffee or "groggs." In this establishment there was a room set apart for such officers of the regiment as liked to subscribe to what they called their "cloob."

It was in this "cloob" that I used to see the officers of all ranks belonging to the regiment. One night, when sitting with my friend apart from the rest of the company, our conversation turned upon military education and military promotion. Until then I was—and I imagine most Englishmen are—under the impression that, though promotion from the ranks is frequent in the French army, the great majority of those who hold commissions have all passed through the military college. My friend, however, undeceived me. At the time we commenced our conversation there were present in the room not fewer than thirty-five or forty officers, including the colonel and lieutenant-colonel of his own regiment, and some half-dozen cavalry and artillery officers who had looked in to join in a glass of "ponch," and take a hand at "veest." My friend looked carefully round the room, noting to himself the names of all those present, and then told me that, with the exception of about ten officers (there were two or three of the artillery and cavalry that he was not certain about), every one present had risen from the ranks.

I could not help expressing surprise; for, not only were the officers present quite as gentlemanly in their habits and manners as the average officers met with in any English regiment, but most of those below the rank of field-officers were—or appeared to be—too young to have had time to pass through the ordeal of the barrack-room, and to have graduated successively as corporal, sergeant, and sergeant-major, up to the rank of commissioned officer.

There was another subject connected with the French army, in which I found out my error. In England we are under the impression that the ranks of our neighbour's land forces are almost entirely recruited from the conscription. In former days it was so, but ever since Napoleon has been emperor he has been doing his utmost to increase the number of what the French call volunteers. So successfully has this scheme been carried out, that, whereas before 1848 not one soldier in fifty was a volunteer, there are now in all the crack corps—the Zouaves, Chasseurs d'Afrique, Hussars, and such-like—quite as many volunteers as conscripts; and in regiments of the line these bear the proportion of full twenty per cent, or one-fifth of the whole. So fast are the proportions of volunteer enlistments to conscriptions increasing

every year, that it is believed conscription in France will soon become almost a dead letter, except in time of war.

"How is it," I asked my friend, "that the emperor has managed to increase, or rather to create—for until he came to power, voluntary enlistment in your army was a thing almost unknown—the number of volunteers from about two to twenty, and, in many cases, to fifty per cent in the whole army?"

"Simply by raising," was the reply, "the prospects of all who enter the ranks of their own free will, and by giving them a fair share of promotion, even up to the highest grades. In former days, though the theory of promotion from the ranks existed, it was not, except under the first empire, put in full practice. It is true that sergeants and sergeant-majors received their due share of promotion to the rank of commissioned officer, but under the restoration, as during the reign of Louis Philippe, they seldom rose higher than lieutenants, or at the most captains. But under Napoleon there is a marked preference given to young men who have begun their career by shouldering a musket, or cleaning a horse; so much so, that many parents, whose sons wish to enter the army, prefer keeping them at home, or at school, until they are eighteen or nineteen, and then letting them enlist, instead of sending them to the military college."

As my informant finished speaking, there entered the room a captain of Lancers, about thirty years of age. He was introduced to me, paid me a very well-turned compliment about the English cavalry regiment which he learnt from my friend I belonged to—a corps he said he had seen in the Crimea—and, after talking with us ten minutes or so, passed on to another part of the room. As he left us, I remarked to my friend that he did, at any rate, not look like an officer who had risen from the ranks.

"You are mistaken," was the reply. "Seven years ago that gentleman was a private soldier. His history is word for word what would describe the career of a dozen officers in every regiment in the French army. He wanted, when sixteen years of age, to enter the military college, but his father would not let him, wishing him to follow his own profession, that of a notaire, or lawyer. The young man remained in his father's office until he was twenty-one years of age, and being then free from control, enlisted as a dragoon. In the school of his corps he qualified himself to become a corporal, and passed an excellent examination. In our army this is the first and sure step towards further promotion. In four years he attained to the rank of sub-lieutenant, and was transferred in that rank to the Chasseurs d'Afrique in Algiers. He saw some service there, but more in the Crimea, and still more in Italy; on returning from which country, he received his captaincy. He may expect, in a couple or three years more, to be a major (chef d'escadrons); in five years more, to be colonel of a

regiment; and to be a general of brigade whilst yet in the prime of life."

"Now tell me," said I, "has not private interest something to do with this system of promotion?"

"I will not deny," said my friend, "that in the French army an officer who has interest gets on better than an officer who has not; but the influence of 'interest' upon promotion is every day getting less. For instance, supposing two officers of equal merit in the same regiment, the one having a friend at the War Office, the other not having this advantage, I have no hesitation in saying that he with interest would win the race of promotion before his companion. But day by day the emperor is making all officers' and non-commissioned officers' promotion to depend entirely upon the number and quality of the marks he bears opposite his name in the books of the regiment, or rather in his own register. These marks he may add to or diminish any day by his own conduct, whether for good or bad, or by his own aptitude or otherwise for the service. Moreover, nothing is done in secret. The annual report of each officer's character and improvement is made by the inspecting general, who at his yearly visitation sees each officer alone, the only other person present being the chief of the general's staff, who is always an officer of the staff corps with the rank of colonel. It is most unlikely that either of these gentlemen should be interested in the promotion of any officers who come before them in the course of duty. True, now and then we hear of an officer whose promotion is very quick, and who is therefore believed—often with good reason—to have some influential friend in high places, but this is the exception, not the rule, and it is very rare indeed either to hear officers grumble because they have not been promoted, or to meet with officers who are discontented at the promotion of any particular individual of their regiment."

"But," said I, "tell me how it is that your soldiers and non-commissioned officers come to be so certain of their promotion? What is the usual routine in advancing these gentlemen to the higher ranks?"

"When," replied my friend, "a young man joins a regiment as private soldier, the first thing he must do is to learn his duty as a soldier. In the infantry this will take him about twelve months; in the cavalry nearly two years. During this time he is called a 'young soldier,' and is obliged—he has no option—to attend for three hours every day one or other of the two regimental schools. In the first of these he is taught the mere elements of education, reading, writing, and the first rules of arithmetic. Should the recruit be a mere peasant, or should his previous teaching have been very defective, he must go to this school. But if it is found that he knows his own language well, and has a fair knowledge of figures, he is sent to the upper school, where he is taught the higher branches of mathematics, and the theo-

retical part of his profession—such as the rules of outpost duty; the principles of forming field defences; the mode of providing for a party of men he may command in an enemy's country; the rules, regulations, orders, and practice of the French army, as well as the rewards he may gain, and the punishments to which he may be liable, if brought before a military tribunal.*

"Once a sergeant," continued my friend, "the promotion to be sub-lieutenant depends very much upon circumstances. If the regiment be on service, and a sergeant have a chance of distinguishing himself, he is sure of promotion at once. Moreover, vacancies that happen in the field—whether from sickness or from deaths in battle—are pretty certain to be filled up from the non-commissioned officers of the corps. A sergeant who knows his duties well, is considered fully eligible for the commissioned ranks of the army, and those who do not obtain the promotion in their own or some other regiment, are pretty certain to be provided for in the staff of garrison towns, in the pay, clothing, or some other department of the army. But in our army no man of fair education, good conduct, smartness as a soldier, and a certain amount of application, need fear obtaining promotion if he enlist. Among our highest officers—marshals, generals of division, and of brigade—rather more than one-half; and among our colonels and lieutenant-colonels, nearly two-thirds; have, in their day, either shouldered muskets as foot soldiers in the ranks, or cleaned horses as private dragoons. Among the orderly officers attached to the household of the emperor, fully one-half have in their day passed through the barrack-room."

My friend took me next day to the barracks, where three or four candidates for the rank of corporal were being examined. The examiners were the colonel, the lieutenant-colonel, a major, and three captains of the regiment. The young men under examination were asked how the soldiers' soup—the chief ingredient of French soldiers' dinners—ought to be prepared? In their replies there was a slight difference, which the old colonel—who had himself risen from the ranks—at once corrected; giving due praise to the soldier who had answered most correctly, and who, for other reasons, was finally declared to be the successful candidate. The officers of the regiment then, one and all, went up to shake hands with him, and congratulate him upon his having gained his first step. I was told that he was the son of a tradesman at Marseilles, and that the soldier who had come off second, was the son of a man of title and nephew of a marshal of France.

Since I returned to England, I have often thought it would be a great advantage if some such system of promotion could be introduced into our own service. In these days no man, unless he is either in the lowest state of poverty,

* The training of a French soldier is described in detail, by a retired non-commissioned officer of the French army, in volume viii., pages 415-469, of this journal.

or is, from his ignorance, utterly useless in any trade or calling, will take service, or engage in any undertaking, unless he hopes sooner or later to better himself. If he enlist, his prospects are hopeless. Even if by smartness, good conduct, and proficiency, he become a non-commissioned officer, there remains between him and the commissioned ranks, a gulf which is almost impassable. Allow that, in process of time, one sergeant out of three or four hundred, in times of peace, is promoted to the rank of cornet or ensign, what hope has he of further advancement? In the whole English army—cavalry, artillery, engineers, and infantry—there are not two dozen captains who have risen from the ranks; and I question whether there are more than two or three field officers. The reason for this is the purchase system, which, to our disgrace as a nation, the legislature persist in upholding, and which is the real cause why our recruiting is almost at a stand-still, and must, before long, come to a dead-lock.

There are in England a vast number of young men, chiefly of the middle class—sons of medical men, clergymen, lawyers, small landed proprietors, and others—born with an innate distaste of anything like a professional life. These youths generally waste the best years of their lives by “loafing” about their native place, until the paternal purse and patience are alike at an end, and then they be-take themselves to one or other of our colonies. These would make excellent soldiers, and have all the dash and daring required for active service; but want of money hinders them from entering as officers, and to enlist in the English army is not only a moral degradation, but sacrificing every chance of ever making a name or even gaining rank. Why should we not make the army fit for such young men to enter, to better their own condition as well as that of the service? To do this, the punishment of the lash must be abolished. No reflecting man who respects himself will ever enter the ranks so long as there remains *even a chance* of his degradation by flogging. The next great evil we have to contend with, is the purchase of commissions, and of promotion. So long as this national disgrace remains in this country of all the countries in Europe, no poor man will enter the army, for he knows well that his poverty will be an insurmountable obstacle to his advancement.

Lastly, abolish all direct appointments to army commissions. There ought to be but two modes of entering the service: the one through the military college—the education at which, by the way, is not so expensive as to be entirely beyond moderate means—the other through the ranks and the barrack-room. Let the latter become a certain means of obtaining commissions for well educated men, who are smart soldiers and of good conduct, and let there be no question of money to hinder their advancement. Do these things, and we shall soon be able to dispense with lying recruiting

agents, crimps, and all who inveigle the unfortunate recruit of the present day into “taking the shilling;” while we shall most assuredly make our own army as popular as the army on the other side of the Channel.

THE STEAM'S HIGHWAY.

THERE is a royal commission now sitting to inquire into the costs of conveying travellers and goods by railway. Everybody knows, or can know, beforehand, what discoveries this commission will place upon record; but the use that will be made of the information so to be authenticated, partly depends upon the public's minding its own business. The common roads of the country are more naturally its own business than anybody's. But what are the common roads? The Queen's Highway is at present the paved or macadamised horse-road, which, for all the larger concerns of travel and traffic, is superseded by the rapidly developing Steam's Highway. Instead of a railway here and a railway there, we have, or shall soon have, a railway everywhere. The iron roads have already become, to all intents and purposes, the common roads, and are, for all the business needs of the nation, that which the old king's highway used to be. Is it desirable that when railroads have become, for all distances of any length, the only natural means of land communication between one part of the country and another, they should be distributed into the absolute keeping of a great number of irresponsible bodies? Does it mend the matter that those bodies are often in conflict with each other, and always wage war with the public by a hostile system of taxation; now drawing thirty-five millions a year out of the public pocket for much less than half the service that sum ought to buy? If the public will but take the trouble to inquire into this matter for itself, there can be only one result, and it will not take long to secure a reduction of the cost of railway travelling to one-third of its present rate.

Of course we all know it is very desirable that we should pay a railway fare of five shillings where we are now paying fifteen. The suggestion of such a change is indeed so unexpectedly agreeable, that we assume the notion of its possibility to be much too good to be true. Yet it may very well be, that where we now pay fifteen shillings for a railway journey, our grandchildren will be paying only eighteen-pence!

Is it absurd to say that transport by railway should be twenty times cheaper than coach travelling used to be? A pound of coke evaporating five pints of water will develop force enough to draw two tons weight on a railway to the distance of a mile in two minutes. A train of coaches weighing eighty tons, and holding two hundred and forty passengers, can be conveyed from Liverpool to Birmingham and back in seven hours, by four tons of coke, which cost about five pounds. To carry as many on a common road, would require

an establishment of three hundred and eighty horses, and they would only do the work in four-and-twenty hours. Of course it is fair to ask, Why is there no proportionate reduction in the charges for conveyance? Because there is, on the railway line, not only the coke and water and working staff to pay for, but the heavy charge on the capital sunk in making the iron road. So, many say: forgetting that, the road once made, the cost of each act of conveyance deducted from the sum paid for the service, is all that determines profits. The prime cost of the road, except as an element in its stability and cause of more or less current expense for repairs, can have nothing to do with the calculation. Upon a balance of current profit and loss alone, it is to be decided what fares will pay best.

The tradesman who raises the price of his goods to pay for a new shop-front may lose old customers worth many shop-fronts. He looks rather to its effect in tempting new customers over his threshold, and his question is simply whether he can make most money by a system of small profits and many sales, or by fewer sales at higher profits on each article, or by charging an enormous profit, and thereby enormously reducing the number of those who deal with him. Reliance is placed on the attraction of large numbers of customers, by taking from each only a modest toll of profit on the cost price of goods sold in many a shop of costliest construction. And, as a matter of fact, the railway lines on which the most money was spent for each mile of original construction, are those on which the charges are the lowest. Whatever the cost of making the line, when once it is made, profits depend on the daily relation between working expenses and receipts. Now, the average fares on English railways are at present twopence-farthing a mile for first class, three-halfpence for second class, and a penny for third, while in a railway train carrying a fair load, when all expenses of conveyance, indirect and direct, have been allowed for, it appears that the cost price of carrying a first-class passenger is a penny for sixteen miles, for carrying a second-class passenger a penny for twenty-five miles, and, by still closer packing, a third-class passenger is conveyed forty miles for a penny. Thus, if the number of travellers increased sufficiently, it is, at any rate, conceivable that a half-crown fare from London to Liverpool might pay better than a fare of thirty shillings.

Railways do find, indeed, at the season when they are sure of a full load of passengers, excursion trains to be a most profitable part of their business. But in habitual use, trains run at what we now regard as the exceptional excursion price, would, it is found, yield a trifles less profit than trains carrying a few passengers who pay a high price for the use of them. It pays shareholders a trifle, only a trifle, better, while it answers the public purpose immeasurably worse, for the railroads to carry one passenger who pays nine shillings, instead of eight

passengers who pay only one shilling apiece. Thus, for the sake of the odd shilling, the train runs with an insufficient load, and seven people, who might have been benefited by the use of what has now become the common highway, are shut out of it. By study of the relation of tariffs to profits on the French bridges and roads, it has been shown that, as the charge rises, there is a diminution of their use, but a gradual rise in the receipt from tolls up to a certain point; beyond which, excess of charge defeats its purpose, and receipts decline. Thus, of a hundred persons who pay for the use of a road or bridge at a charge of a penny, eighty will use it, and the receipts are eighty pence. At a charge of twopence, only sixty-three will use it, but the receipts, being twice sixty-three, rise to one hundred and twenty-six pence. If the charge be threepence, only fifty will incur it, but the receipts still rise, for three times fifty are one hundred and fifty. At a charge of fourpence, only forty-one will use it, but four times forty is again a higher point attained in the receipts. By charging a penny more, eight persons more are excluded from use of the road; but there is yet increase in the receipts, though but an increase of a single penny. After that point, the increase of charge produces dwindling profits until it comes to a point absolutely prohibitive. Now, the whole business of a private railway board having its own monopoly of traffic, is to find the point of highest receipt, and if one more turn of the screw exclude hundreds of persons from the use of their line, and an almost imperceptible increase of revenue, yet, if it be increase, it is the railway directors' present duty to secure it.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the companies were all extinct, and that the railways were the Queen's highways: that is to say, public roads, with their traffic service under control of the people for whose use they are constructed. In that case, it is obvious that the addition of a half per cent to the working profits—which is all that is got by substituting a half prohibitive tariff for habitual use of "excursion fares"—would be as nothing to the diffused national prosperity that must come of a thoroughly cheap, and still profitable, system of passenger and goods traffic. Towns would flourish, industries revive, town workers could afford to live in country houses, health would be cheaply restored by accessible sea-breezes; we should all be practically nearer to one another, healthier, wealthier, and wiser, for our opportunities of free movement and ready intercourse.

A committee of the House of Commons once declared "that the roads of a country are public concerns, and necessary to the people as the air they breathe." Suppose the country now to be of opinion that it is unwise to delegate to conflicting bodies of private individuals the whole charge of the roads as monopolies and individual trade speculations of their own. Well, for the present, that is too much to suppose. Thirteen great companies now possess and manage three-fourths of the land traffic of the

United Kingdom. Some charge for their services nearly twice as much as others. The Great Eastern charges more than twice as much as the Caledonian for carrying a first-class passenger a hundred miles. Of forty-two of our companies, the fares now range from a halfpenny to three-pence-halfpenny a mile for first-class travellers; from a halfpenny to twopence for second class; and for third class from a farthing to three-halfpence. An excursion train on the Great Western to Plymouth, takes passengers at the rate of fifty pence the hundred miles; on the South Eastern to Ramsgate, the charge for the same service is twenty pence the hundred miles. The prime cost, direct and indirect, of carrying a first-class passenger a hundred miles being only sixpence, fares are charged which compel trains to run with an average of only a tenth of the number of passengers they are capable of carrying, and with a third or a quarter of the loads that could be taken with no appreciable addition of expense. The dearest line to travel on, Carmarthen and Cardigan, charges four hundred and fifty per cent more than the North and South Western, the line with lowest fares. And it is a notable fact that this line with lowest fares pays a dividend of six per cent to its shareholders, while the North London, also a line of cheap fares—three-farthings a mile for first class, and less than a halfpenny for second—although it was ten times as expensive to construct as an ordinary line, enjoys also the rare distinction of paying a dividend of six per cent.

Let us see what happens when railways contest with each other for possession of some line of traffic. At the time of the Manchester Art Exhibition, a contest between the London and North-Western and Great Northern Companies enabled Londoners to go to Manchester and back for seven-and-sixpence for first class, and for second class five shillings. The whole expense of each train so run was fifty guineas, and the average receipts from each were one hundred and seventy-four pounds. The contest lasted during the summer months, to the very great advantage of the public; and a half per cent was all the fall in the railway dividend.

The quarrel in the years 'fifty-two and 'fifty-three, between the South-Eastern and Great Western, for the London and Reading traffic, lasted about a year and a half. To a distance of sixty-seven miles and back again, passengers were conveyed during all that time for three shillings first class, and two shillings second class. On other parts of their lines, those companies were charging ten times as much: yet, where the fares were lowest, there was an average profit of two hundred and fifty per cent upon the cost of running every train. Again, ten years ago, the Edinburgh and Glasgow and the Caledonian lines quarrelled and took passengers by all trains from Edinburgh to Glasgow, forty-six miles, for fares of one shilling, nine-pence, and sixpence, being one-eighth of the former charges. The Caledonian paid only a half per cent less dividend; yet here was not only a reduction of fares to one-eighth, but also

a division of the traffic between two contending lines. Under the present system of fares, an ordinary passenger train may be compared to a four-horse coach carrying one passenger upon each journey.

On the Bombay and Baroda Railway, where the gradients are very favourable, and a single engine can draw heavy weights, the average rate of fares for all classes is two shillings the hundred miles, or one-sixth of the average rate in England. In Belgium, when the railway system of that country was planned, the government undertook that it should be managed exclusively for the public convenience, as neither a burden nor a source of revenue, and the fares were fixed at less than a penny a mile for first-class passengers. The Belgian Minister of Finance, M. Rogier, resisted the adoption of the English system; for, he said, "whoever holds the railways, holds a monopoly, and that should only be allowed to exist in the possession of the State, subject to the responsible advisers of the Crown."

On our railways, as they are, there are made in a year about two hundred and ten million of journeys, the payment for which is about fifteen millions sterling. For conveyance of goods we pay to the railways about seventeen millions sterling, at rates varying from twelve and sixpence the hundred miles for a ton of stone or manure, to thirty-seven and sixpence for the same conveyance of a ton of cotton goods. For a hundred tons of coal or coke, the average rate of charge is over a pound a mile. The cost price of that service is only one-and-fourpence; and, as the price of coal at the pit mouth is about a fourth of what we pay in London, if railways were managed with an eye to public benefit, even with three hundred per cent profit on the railway carriage, coal could be sold in London at ten shillings a ton. The Midland Company stated in evidence on this subject, that after they had brought coal from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire at a charge of six shillings a ton, a toll of two shillings a ton was levied on it by another company for crossing over the lines to Kensington Basin. A Committee of the Society of Arts on the Small Parcels Post, found that a parcel sent from Land's End to John o' Groat's must be transferred through nineteen separate conveying interests, from each of which inquiry must be made in event of delay or loss. Sometimes, a company forming a link in such a chain of conveyance, in feud with a neighbour or for other causes, checks general transit by a prohibitive charge. Feuds there may well be, for these companies are heavily taxed by conflicting interests. Four lines were, at the outset, proposed from London to Brighton, and the parliamentary expenses of their contest for one year amounted to a hundred thousand pounds. "There were about twenty counsel engaged, headed by six king's serjeants and king's counsel; there was a regiment of twenty eminent solicitors, flanked by a whole brigade of parliamentary agents, and a whole army of surveyors and engineers, whose chief business appeared to be to contradict each

other, the lawyers aiding and assisting, and chuckling with delight."

But now comes the question whether the chief highways of this country are to remain an inharmonious system of private roads, levying at discretion a high and widely-varying rate of tolls on our land traffic, or whether it is possible to bring them under popular control, make them our own, and have the utmost use of them.

In the year eighteen 'forty-four, an act of parliament was passed to give the country power, if it had the will, to buy on certain terms all the railways made on our own soil after that date. The country was to come into possession of this power, on the expiration of twenty-one years from the date of the act. The term expires, therefore, in this year 'sixty-five, and the time has arrived when the public may consider whether it will exercise the power it acquires over five-sixths of the existing railway mileage, and whether, in the present state of the railway market, the other sixth would not be glad to take part in a bargain that would benefit alike the country and the railway shareholders. The act of 'forty-four was introduced by Mr. Gladstone, then President of the Board of Trade, and was founded on the inquiries of a committee nominated and presided over by himself. Before that committee, Mr. Baxendale, head of the great carrying firm of Pickford and Co., and chairman of the South-Eastern Railway, said, "I have always considered that the commerce of this country has prospered to the extent it has done in consequence of the great freedom of communication; I have always considered that the roads of the country belonged altogether to the people, just as much as the light of heaven." And Captain Laws, who, as manager of the Leeds and Manchester Railway, first introduced third-class carriages in England, thought that the iron roads might be managed for the country on a method intermediate between the companies' system and the penny post system, or with rates little above the working expenses and the interest of money, as a means of "giving very great facilities, and greatly promoting every description of domestic industry, whether of manufacture or agriculture." He thought that a great saving might be effected by an uniform and far less costly management, and the cessation of feuds and parliamentary contests; and that the system, as then established, not only had much of the character of a monopoly, but that every extension was calculated to increase that monopoly immensely, and to establish a continuation of monopolies.

Of the act of 'forty-four, when it was introduced, Sir Robert Peel said: "They were about to say to the railway companies, You shall not have a permanent monopoly against the public; but, after a limited number of years, we give you notice we shall have the option of purchasing your property." The limited number of years is now expiring, and it is for the public to consider whether it can wisely take to itself and make its own, the great and costly network of the private roads that have almost

exclusive mastery over our means of inland communication. As an element in such consideration will be a study of the present cost of railway conveyance, upon that subject the commission is now sitting, which will arrive at facts such as those we have here given from a volume upon Railway Reform, by Mr. WILLIAM GALT, who has done more than any other man to fix public attention on the facts and principle involved in the whole question.

If the people should elect to purchase, the first obvious question is, Where will they find all the money? Even Great Britain cannot write a cheque for the fair price of all the railway property in the United Kingdom. If the railway companies were unwilling parties to the bargain, they could probably demand cash payment, and so destroy all chance of arrangement. But the standing interests of the companies are not opposed in this matter to those of the public; so purchase would mean, simply the exchange of railway shares for a certain amount of government stock: the shareholders giving up property from which they receive an uncertain dividend for a fixed annuity secured in perpetuity. The transfer of railway into government stock might be made in proportion to the average dividends paid by each company for three years previous to purchase, or with reference to the current market price. The act of 'forty-four fixed the rate at an equivalent to twenty-five years' purchase, estimated on an average of profits for the three years previous to sale, and provided valuation, determined in case of difference by arbitration, for railways that were not paying dividends of ten per cent. Railway property has declined so much in market value during the last twenty years, that it all falls under the latter clause, and the arrangement for transfer of stock proposed by Mr. Galt is, that railway shares should be exchanged for government stock with an average bonus of about fifteen per cent upon their actual market value. He would be an odd shareholder who would object to such a bargain.

But would the railways under the new system be a good security to underlie the public funds? All the territorial property of England is security for the Three per Cents. For the additional charge, there would be the same security with all the railways added. If there were a short-coming of railway profits, it would be because the public, while having all its powers of prosperity enlarged by the increased facilities of travel and traffic, still kept in its pocket cash that, under the old system, came out of it; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer would know how to get at that. But, in fact, since it has been proved by experience that a sacrifice of at most one per cent from a five and a half per cent dividend will secure a reduction of fares to one-half or one-third their present rate, the development of wealth and prosperity by all the aids that could then be given, would probably pay back even that one per cent in a hundred indirect ways: to say nothing of the immediate profit from a purchase advantageous to both

parties, and the great subsequent economy from the cessation of contests and the saving in working expenses that would result from the amalgamation of the lines.

Well, we will grant all that to be reasonable enough, and well worth public consideration. But how is the last grand difficulty to be conquered? If the iron roads belong to the country, and are to be subject in every respect to legislation with regard to nothing but the public interest, who is to direct them? For, certainly, neither Mr. Galt nor Mrs. Grundy, nor anybody else, will permit the mass of patronage involved in the gift of all the places upon all the railways to be vested in the crown. Nobody believes that all the railways of the nation can be as well governed by a Circumlocution Office as they are governed now by their own boards of able and competent directors. What Mr. Galt proposes is, that government should have very little railway patronage, and that the administration of the railways should remain still with the ablest of the men who now administer them. The country itself in parliament learns what it ought to pay, and decides what it will pay, for railway service, and directs every change of system that it finds to be necessary for its safety, comfort, or convenience. The present directors of each important railway line elect their most competent men to form a railway board of four-and-twenty members, under a president and two vice-presidents, who should be responsible servants of the State: one vice-president permanent, for mastery of business details: the other two removable with a change of government. The duties of this board, composed of men acquainted with the railway affairs of each part of the country, should be strictly administrative, to carry out the system as required by parliament. Under them, each line should be managed in harmony with the main system, but with minute reference to the convenience of the district served by it, having the same local board of directors that it now has, and the same staff; the whole existing personnel of the railway service being retained, and all fair compensation made to any one whose office is abolished. And it does really seem far from impossible to effect an arrangement which shall make the public a large gainer, while nobody whose fortunes are in any way connected with the railway interest shall be a loser, and very many will be gainers. In fact, the railway interest is, we believe, not recusant; the only real obstacle to the achievement of this great change which would knock off two-thirds of the expense of railway conveyance, is public inattention, and, in the absence of a knowledge of that fact, natural incredulity as to the chance of so great a boon being attainable.

For a spirited and valuable sketch of the possibilities of the case, and the facts from which they are inferred, we commend everybody to the short published address on Railway Reform, read by MR. EDWIN CHADWICK to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, as President of its

Department of Economy and Trade. Branch railways can now be constructed at one-third of the cost of the old ones; and by improvements of construction — including the use of steel rails, which last ten years longer than iron, besides being safer — the cost of working can be reduced. By keeping the goods traffic clear of the passenger traffic, the trains can be run at increased speed. The journey to Edinburgh could be safely reduced from twelve hours to seven, and more than proportionally cheapened. Even on lines of inferior construction, trains are now run at a speed of from fifty to sixty miles an hour. We should be free also to give ourselves more complete passenger accommodation; with a way for guard or passengers from carriage to carriage; with carriages well warmed, lighted, and ventilated; and we could have on the improved lines, movement so easy that the traveller could write; we could have upon all lines, easy sleeping-couches to be secured in the night trains; and arrangements to provide in the trains tea, coffee, and other refreshments of good quality, which travellers could take at their own leisure and convenience, without choking themselves, or scalding themselves, or suffering delay upon the journey. All these things are not only possible, but have actually been done in the trains furnished by the American Sanitary Commission for the conveyance of wounded soldiers; and there is no reason why one must have a sword or a gunshot wound to earn the right of travelling in a train with an attached kitchen, and otherwise made thoroughly comfortable. Then again: we might all pay, in a trivial addition to each fare, an insurance fee, which would make immediate compensation the rule in all cases of accident, while enforcing for our own sakes the precautions by which almost all railway accidents can be prevented.

At any rate, we should have — especially after the complete abolition of the law of settlement — a readier harmony between supply and demand in the labour market. The man who has no work in Lancashire could be carried cheaply into Devonshire if wanted there; or he could afford to move about freely in search of work.

Goods also could be supplied direct from the best source. With a harmonised railway system and cheap parcels carriage, private customers may be supplied from a hundred miles away, as easily as from a distant street in the same town. Retail traders may keep reduced stocks, and save themselves many a loss by ordering from the manufacturers perishable articles or articles of perishable fashion, more nearly as they are demanded of them by their customers. The fish of the seaports can be poured into the inland towns. The mother who may now send her soldier boy a Bible weighing half a pound for twopence, but cannot send him a pair of warm stockings knitted by her hand, may send what little gift she will, if, with command of the railway system (and saving of the heavy fancy charge that is now made for conveyance of the mails), a parcel post be grafted on the existing

post-office system. It could be done at a stroke almost. By mounting a few more rural postmen upon carts, and making due addition to their work and pay, the existing post-office machinery of collection and distribution could be adapted to the conveyance of light parcels of every kind. The telegraphs along the railway lines would also be available for the establishment of a cheap telegraph post.

What need we say more? Is there not here, enough to make it manifest that the railway system has attained, or is attaining, the point when, by complete assimilation to the public needs, it is capable of making wonderful additions to the welfare of the people? English railway property pays a net average of four per cent. The Belgian lines, at fares one-third of ours, pay five-and-a-half per cent. But we need copy nobody. No foreign nation has all that we desire, and all that we can, if we will, attain. By private enterprise we have secured the finest railway system in Europe. By converting all these private roads into public roads, with advantage instead of loss to their shareholders, and by employing the ability now bestowed on their direction as monopolies, in their administration for the highest welfare of the public, we may take a new lead, draw closer together all the corners of our land, add greatly to its commercial prosperity and its domestic comforts, and, foremost still, set an example to surrounding nations as instructive as that of our great measures of postal reform. The only real difficulty is, that the public is new to this idea of change, and therefore not prepared sufficiently to support a bold measure of legislation.

THE BOAT OF GRASS.

For years the slave endured his yoke,
Down-trodden, wronged, misused, opprest,
Yet life-long serfdom could not choke
The seeds of freedom in his breast.

At length, upon the north wind came
A whisper stealing through the land;
It spread from hut to hut like flame,
"Take heart! the hour is near at hand."

The whisper spread, and lo, on high
The dawn of an unhoped-for day:
"Be glad! the northern troops are nigh,
The fleet is in Port Royal Bay!"

Responsive to the words of cheer,
An inner voice said, "Rise and flee!
Be strong, and cast away all fear;
Thou art a man, and thou art free!"

And full of new-born hope and might
He started up, and seaward fled;
By day he turned aside—by night,
He followed where the North Star led.

Through miles of barren pine and waste,
And endless breadth of swamp and sedge,
By streams, whose tortuous path is traced
In tangled growth along their edge.

Two nights he fled—no sound was heard;
He met no creature on his way;
Two days crouched in the bush—the third,
He hears the bloodhounds' distant bay.

They drag him back to stripes and shame,
And bitter unrequited toil;
With red hot gyves his feet they maim,
All future thought of flight to foil.

We shuddering turn from such a cup,
Nor dare to look on his despair;
For them—oh! let us offer up
The Saviour's sacrificial prayer.

But the celestial voice that spake
Erst in his soul, might not be hushed;
The sense of birthright once awake,
Could never, never more be crushed.

And brave of heart, and strong of will,
He kept his purpose, laid his plan;
Though crippled, chained, and captive still,
A slave no longer, but a man.

Eleven months his soul he steeled
To toil and wait in silent pain,
But in the twelfth his wounds were healed—
He burst his bonds, and fled again.

A weary winding stream he sought,
And crossed its waters to and fro;
An Indian wife, to set at nought
The bloody instinct of his foe.

The waters widen to a fen,
And while he hid him, breathless, there,
With brutal cries of dogs and men,
The hunt went round and round his lair.

The baffled hounds have lost the track—
With many a curse, and many a cry,
The angry owners called them back,
And so the wild pursuit went by.

The deadly peril seemed to pass,
And then he dared to raise his head
Above the waving marsh grass,
That mantled o'er the river bed.

Those long broad leaves that round him grew
He had been wont to bind and plait,
And well with simple skill he knew
To shape the basket and the mat.

Now, in their tresses sad and dull
He saw the hope of his escape,
And patiently began to call
And weave them in canoe-like shape.

To give the reedy fabric slight
An armour 'gainst the soaking brine,
With painful care he sought by night
The amber weepings of the pine.

And since, on that Egyptian wave
The Hebrew launched her little ark,
Faith never to God's keeping gave
So great a hope, so frail a bark.

Oh, silent river of the south!
Whose lonely stream ne'er felt the oar
In all its course, from rise to mouth,
What precious freight was that you bore?

The grizzled oak and tall dark pine
Stretch out their boughs from either bank
Across the stream, and many a vine
Festoons them with luxuriance rank.

The yellow jasmine fills the shade
With golden light, and downward shed
From slender wreaths that lightly swayed,
Her fragrant stars upon his head.

But still the boat from dawn to dark
'Neath overhanging shrubs was drawn,
And loosed at eve, the little bark
Safe floated on from dark to dawn.

At length, in that mysterious hour
That comes before the break of day,
The current gained a swifter pow'r,
The boat began to rock and sway:

He felt the wave beneath him swell,
His nostrils drank a fresh salt breath,
The boat of rushes rose and fell—
"Lord! is it life or is it death?"

He saw the eastern heaven spanned
With a slow spreading belt of grey,
Tents glimmered, ghost-like, on the sand,
And phantom ships before him lay;

The sky grew bright, the day awoke,
The sun flash'd up above the sea,
From countless drum and bugle broke,
The joyous northern Réveillé:

Oh, white-winged warriors of the deep!
No heart e'er hailed you so before:
No castaway on desert steep,
Nor banished man, his exile o'er,

Nor drowning wretch lashed to a spar,
So blessed your rescuing sails, as he
Who on them first beheld from far
The morning light of Liberty.

THIS SLAVE'S ESCAPE WAS ACTUALLY MADE AS DESCRIBED, AND HIS FRAIL BOAT ATTRACTED GREAT ATTENTION AT THE NEW YORK SANITARY FAIR; TO WHICH IT WAS SENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

DEATH IN THE LATEST FASHIONS.

Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,
And make Death proud to take us,

said Cleopatra, when planning that most characteristic of parting scenes on poetical record, in which "the wrangling Queen" and "the Serpent of old Nile," to outwit victorious Caesar, crowned herself to take her last sad journey, like the great Queen which she was,—who had withal been something of a courtesan, which means something of a coquette.

The deckings of Death by paganism have been mostly, and are in many countries still, hideous, elaborate, and splendid. Think of such obsequies as those of Radama, King of Madagascar—of such an African rite as the one so admirably sung by Herr Freiligrath, in which a horde of living women, with all their warm treasure of youth and life and beauty, and all

the trash which passes with them for adornment, are forced, with a ghastly pretext of willing pride, to share the grave of their lord and master!

Think of the Suttee, which has been bravely stood up for, as an East Indian institution—akin to those of hook-swinging by half-mad Fakirs, and of the crushing chariot of Juggernaut—by such fossil legislators of the Circumlocution Office as would let Ill alone; this burning of the widow being only by one shade worse than another distribution of the dying and dead! Think of the family festival of the Battas, put on record by Sir Stamford Raffles in his work on the Indian Archipelago! They did (if they do not now) kill, and cook, and eat their grandfathers and grandmothers when the same were proved to be effete and past work. And the dinner-party given on the occasion passed as an exceeding sprightly jollification.

But the above, it may be said, are savage death-ceremonies. Can our United Kingdom, first and foremost in civilisation, show nothing (respective circumstances considered) analogous? London, I am afraid, our head-quarters of the above-claimed perfection, has given an answer—and not a stammering one—to this question within the last few weeks.—In a couple of examples, it has proved that we can still allow, as a tribute to a great dead man, no matter whether ecclesiastic or lay, such a show as a lying in state—that grim union of Death and upholstery.

The coffin of the Cardinal, so detailed the daily press, was lined with white and amber satin. The diseased face was plastered where the fatal sores had been: on the feet the shoes of splendour had been put on. The gloved hands were garnished by rings more precious than those the worm will wind round them ere the year is out. Can it be said that love and reverence prompted the arrangement of such a masque of splendour and corruption? Dismal, hollow lie! Coarse, tawdry disrespect, rather, to the inevitable Angel, in whose coming there is that instant, awful summons of change,—not to be arrested, not to be disguised, by rouge, and jewels, and millinery, or even by a last bed lined with white and amber satin!

We have been used to comment freely on the wasteful arrogance of our ancestors, and on their battling with the destroyer, inch by inch—ay, some of them in their own persons. Who has forgotten Princess Buckingham, the bastard daughter of our King James the Second, and her provisions for a state funeral, as recounted by Walpole? "She has sent for Mr. Anstis," he writes to Sir Horace Mann, "and settled the ceremonial of her burial. On Saturday she was so ill that she feared dying before all the pomp was come home; she said, 'Why won't they send the canopy for me to see? Let them send it, though the tassels are not finished.' But yesterday was the greatest stroke of all. She made her *ladies* vow to her that, if she should be senseless, they would not sit down in the room before she was dead.—She not only," continues the keen chronicler, "regulated the ceremony of

her own burial, and dressed up the waxen figure of herself for Westminster Abbey, but had shown the same insensible pride on the death of her only son, dressing his figure, and sending messages to her friends, that if they had a mind to see him lie in state, she would carry them in convenience by a back door."

(This was in the early days of newspapers. On the day of writing this, was advertised in our leading journal the place where tickets were to be had for the Black Show, and whether faithful retainers of a deceased nobleman were to repair and find their "fittings.")

"Princess Buckingham sent," to resume Walpole's narrative, "to the old Duchess of Marlborough to borrow the triumphal car that had carried the Duke's body. Old Sarah, as mad and as proud as herself, sent her word that 'it had carried my Lord Marlborough, and should never be profaned by any other corpse.' The Buckingham returned, that 'she had spoken to the undertaker, and he had engaged to make a finer for twenty pounds.'"

It might have been hoped that our world was becoming wiser; and that the simple and touching mortuary dispositions of the last deceased Queen of England might not have been without avail as an example. "I die," said the will of that sovereign lady, "in all humility,"—and the one state request left by herself, in regard to her funeral, was, that, being the widow of our Sailor-King, she should be borne to her grave by man-of-war's men. Surely a simple loving nature spoke in this provision, which sets such a direction above and apart from those in which the coffin lined with amber and white satin cuts a figure for a paragraph, or for which mourners are directed by advertisement where to apply for "fittings," and cards to enter the Black Chamber.

Let us go back for homelier illustration. I was born into a world, in a quiet corner of England, where usages little less preposterous universally obtained, and a certain festival was held over Death, even among those who embraced Dissent under presence of a rigour which has no longer any existence anywhere in this country; among persons who considered Music and Painting as the devices of the Evil One; and who took up their parable against colour in nature. I remember a preacher whose mind was made uneasy by the sight of a field of red clover, and another who assumed it sinful to wear any garments that had been dyed.—But even these narrow and sincere fanatics permitted the jum-keting of savoury meats and strong drinks in the House of Mourning on the day of interment. I am free to tell (the time is so far away, and the departure of every one whom the tale could wound is so complete) of a woman, admirable in acting up to her conscience—the brave head of a large and attached family—who laid herself down to die at an advanced age; having made every just and conceivable provision for the comfort of every one that was to follow her. She had a few minutes to spare ere the extreme moment came; and those she turned to account

by ordering the dinner which was to be given at her own house on the day of her own funeral. "And see," she said, "that the knives are sharp—for when my husband died, and Cousin Somebody sat at the bottom of the table, the goose was mangled, and nobody got a proper helping."

The fancy for "funeral baked meats," however, has been exploded in this country, save, perhaps, in the wake of the poorer Irish. Why then cling to the barbarisms of making the bed of Death a show? Why this ghastly funereal magnificence, so terrible to real grief, as distinguished from gaping curiosity? No one that has ever taken part or place in any spectacle of the kind, can have failed, be he kinsman, or friend, or stranger, to have been repulsively struck with the incongruities it must present.—I was in Victor Hugo's cathedral, Notre-Dame de Paris, to see there the lying in state of M. de Quélen, the predecessor of that archbishop who, on his Christian mission to make peace, was shot down on the Barricades of 1848. Nothing could be well more impressive than the appearance of the cathedral, hung as it was with black, dimly lighted, and up one of the side-aisles of which the spectators crept in silence,—their approach being regulated by those police restrictions, which, as regards the management of crowds, our neighbours understand so well. Droning psalms, accompanied by the nasal serpent, enhanced the gloom of the scene. But the suppressed talk of the men (perfectly audible to the women) with which they beguiled the step by step pilgrimage, was of a cynical uncleanness, that made the cheek redden with shame.—And when we got to the chapel, where the dignitary laid in his splendour, with the face uncovered,—and where each was allowed two minutes of genuflexion at the rails of the illuminated chapel, to gaze on the sight, and (by courtesy) to say a Pater or Ave for the parted soul:—"Stop, Anatole," said my neighbour to his companion, with an oath which shall not pollute this paragraph, "only look! They have painted the old cove's cheeks, and his lips too!"—The other swore they had done no such thing; and by disputing and betting on the fact, the two beguiled the slow exit from the holy place; made more solemn (one might have thought) by the presence of the cold clay of him who had been in some sort a king and a ruler there.

There is not one reader of the above desultory paragraphs, that has reached man's estate, and used his faculties of observation, who could not add to them similar recollections derived from history or similar experiences of his own, in which every feeling of what is just and becoming and affectionate to the dead, has revolted against shows which belong to feast and festival, to pleasure and triumph,—to the hours when the heart expands with success, and the open hand showers its gifts—but which are cruel, disproportionate, repulsive, barbarous, in short, as belonging to the awful moment of severance between this life and that which is to come.—How

long will it be ere *lie-ing* in state shall cease out of a Christian land, which professes itself to be a land of thought and enlightenment?

MAUREEN LACEY.

IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

It was Hallow Eve in the island of Inisbofin, off the coast of Connemara, seven miles out in the Atlantic. There had been a ruddy sunset, and the sea round the tall grey crags was still heaving with wonderful colours. The blazing crimson, vivid purple, and tawny gold, that had burned on cloud, hill, and wave, were getting toned down to deeper, staider hues. Maureen's long day's work in the open air was almost over, and she stood knee-deep in the heather, binding her bundle of broom with a rope of straw.

Round and round about her swept the sad barren island, very sad and very barren at such a season, and such an hour. High, bleak, wandering uplands, deep purple hollows, long brown flats of treacherous morass, dark melancholy pools studded with clumps of lonesome rushes: only here and there a soaring crag still rosy. Maureen raised her head and looked around, pausing a moment before swinging her fragrant burden on her shoulders. She was scarcely musing upon the beauty of the scene; she knew nothing about the artistic splendour of its desolation. More likely she was thinking of whether the frost was coming yet, and how long the potatoes would last, as she stood there making a picture herself in her short crimson petticoat, and nappikeen of chequered blue, knotted under her chin. She rested, not to enjoy anything, but to draw breath. She looked like a girl who had worked a good deal, and who meant to work more. Her steady mouth in its silence said this; so did her quick blue eye; so did every motion of her lithe active figure. Her face was round and comely, and there was beauty in the wreath of rich yellow hair that crowned her shapely head. A few years more of such hardships as Maureen had endured since her childhood, would take the softness from her cheeks and the lustre from her locks. Still, rack must be carried from rock to field, potatoes planted, turf cut and stacked. Rent must be paid, and meal bought when the potatoes failed. Maureen would have little time to think of her looks.

Maureen had a good walk before her, for she was now standing in what is called the West Quarter, and her home was at the North Beach. Swinging her burden on her shoulders, she set out at a brisk pace. There was not a sound in the air but the screaming of some seagulls round a pool, or now and then a whirring noise of wings, as a sudden flight of moor-fowl rushed past overhead. Even the break of the sea on the shore was lost, except for that almost imperceptible sighing which is perpetual in the island of Bofin. Maureen took heed of nothing as she hastened on. Her thoughts were full of the potatoes.

Presently a more homely sound stole over the air. Some one was whistling on the path

behind Maureen. Hearing this, she quickened her steps, with a sudden heat in her face, and tightness of breath. But the following foot came surely on. Its pace was swifter than hers.

"Save ye, Maureen!" said a genial voice beside her. "Give us the bun'le. Yer fair broke in two halves with the weight of it."

This speaker was a stalwart young fisherman, with as much eagerness in his bronzed kindling face as there had been haste in his pursuing step. Maureen stopped short, and looked at him with a proud troubled directness in her eyes.

"What for should I give you my bun'le, Mike Tiernay?" she said, sternly. "You just carry yer own bun'les, and I'll carry mine. That's the safest that I can see betune us two."

She gave her burden a resolute jerk, and began plodding on more steadily than before. But Mike kept by her side.

"It's always the hard word with you, Maureen," he said, bitterly. "It's often a trouble to me wondherin' if I was to work for a hondhert years for wan smile, would you give me that same in the end?"

"Just as likely not," said Maureen, shortly. "If ye have so little to do with yer time begin and work for girls that has the world light on their shoulders. There's plenty in Bofin 'll give you smiles for nothin' without waitin' for the hondhert years to be up. Maureen Lacey hasn't time for sich foolery!"

"Whisht, Maureen!" cried Mike. "You know well that I care as little for the smile that isn't on your face as the hungry man cares for the stone by the roadside. Ye know that the sight o' you's mate an' dhrink to me the longest day that iver I fasted, an' the smallest word you'd speake in the winther is sweeter to me than the larks' singin' in the spring. But if my corpse was waked to-night you'd thramp over my grave to-morrow, an' think more o' the daisies ye hurt with yer foot, than of me lyin' below."

"Yer not dead," said Maureen, sullenly, "nor dyin' neither, nor likely. But if ye were, an' yer grave lay in the road o' my work, I suppose I'd thramp over it all as wan as another. An' as for smilin', it's little good smiles 'd do betune you an' me. They wouldn't boil the pot for the dawny stepmother an' the weeshe wanceens at home. I've given ye this answer many's the time afore, though wanst might have been enough, a body 'd think."

"Well, Maureen," said Mike, drawing himself up, "I'm not the mane wretch to keep botherin' a girl wanst she said in ainst 'Mike, I don't like you, there's others I could like betther.' But that's what you niver said to me yet, Maureen, an' in spite o' yer hard words there's a glint I've seen in yer eye, ay, faith! a weeshe glint, that keeps me warm the cru'lest day that iver I put in on yon waves. There's news I wanted to tell ye to-night, an' a bit of a question I wanted to ax ye. But when ye come slap on me with yer crass talk, it just chokes the courage down my throat."

"I'm glad it does," said Maureen. "I neither want to hear yer news, nor to answer yer ques-

tions. An' now we're comin' to the village. Here's my path, an' there's the road to the East Ind. Ye'd betther let me go home my lone."

"Go your lone, then!" said Mike, fierily, "an' I'll go mine. I'll be betther off than you, anyways, that hasn't as much as the sore heart for company. Sorra bit! but such a thing was left out clane the day ye were made. Maureen!" he added, eagerly, as she turned away, his angry voice falling to a coaxing whisper, "there's to be a Hallow's Eve dance at Biddy Prendergast's to-night. Hurry the childher to bed, an' give yer mother her beads to count at the fire, an' come. Will you?"

Maureen had stopped short. "No, I won't," she said, in a low voice.

"Feth ye will now, avourneen!"

"Feth I won't!" persisted the girl, doggedly, with her eyes on the ground.

"An' ye plase, then," cried Mike, with another burst of passion. "There'll be plenty of likely girls at Biddy's—Peggy Moran for wan, the best dancer in the island. Bad seran to the bit of my ould brogues that I won't dance off my feet to The Little House under the Hill with her. No, but ye'll come, Maureen. I'll take my oath that I'll see you comin' walkin' in like a May mornin' afore I'm up on the floor a crack with Peggy."

Maureen gave her bundle one final jerk, and Mike one final glance, as she turned away.

"An' if you do," she said, "I'll give ye love in full to take as lies every word I've said to-night, an' every could word that iver I said since you begun to speake to me this ways. A pleasant dance to you, then, with Peggy Moran. Good evenin'!"

She turned off abruptly, and struck out on her homeward path. Mike gave one passionate look after her, and then marched away in the other direction, whistling The Little House under the Hill with all his might.

The defiant echoes shrilled about Maureen's ears as she hastened on. She was near her home now. The rough shingle of the North Beach opened grey and wide before her. Here and there a tall crag stood up like a ghoul and wrapped the shadows about it. Inland, falls and hills had changed from brown to black. A purple darkness had settled over the track she had travelled. The sound of the tossing surf became more loudly audible at every step, and the "village," an irregular musterling of cabins, sent forth a grateful savour of turf smoke upon the raw lonely air. Lights twinkled here and there from windows, and the red glow of the fire shone under every open doorway. Before passing the first of these doors, Maureen stopped and wiped a hot tear or two from her cheek with her apron. Then she hurried on, lightening her step as she trod the rough causeway of the "village," threading her way amongst her neighbours' houses, and bearing from many an ingle Maureen Lacey gettin' home, poor girl!"

At one of the furthest cabins facing the sea Maureen stopped, and stepped over the door-

step into the firelit shelter. Her eyes, accustomed to the red smoky atmosphere, saw her stepmother sitting at the hearth-stone with a child upon her knee, and some four or five other little ones grouped about the embers at their play. These Maureen had expected to see, but her eyes went straight from them to two other figures, less familiar. Two visitors, a man and a woman, were seated properly on chairs, visitor-like, at a respectful distance from the fire. On these, for the sin of their presence, Maureen's glance passed severe judgment.

"Save ye, Con Lavelle!" she said, slowly, as she closed the door behind her. "Save ye, Nan!"

And then, without heeding their response, she went to the furthest corner of the cabin, and threw her bundle of heather from her back upon a heap of turf. Straightening her bent figure with a sigh of relief, she untied the blue kerchief from her head, and knotted it loosely round her neck. She passed her hand over her hair, damp with the dew, and smoothed back a straggling lock or two. Then, with her arms full of turf, she came silently over to the hearth, and began to "make down" a good roaring fire to boil the potatoes for the supper. The visitors drew back to give her more room, and the stepmother whispered, as she bent forward to the blaze,

"Who was walkin' on the bog with you, Maureen?"

A flash leaped out of the girl's eyes. She went on with her task in silence for about a minute, and then she said, in a steady voice, loud enough for the others to hear:

"If ye hard there was any wan, mother, ye hard who it was, and so I needn't tell you what you knowed afore."

"What was he sayin' to you, asthore?"

"It's no matther to anybody what he was sayin'. He's plottin' no murther, that his words should be kep' an' counted."

"An' what did you say to him, avourneen?"

"Nothin' that went again my promise to you, mother. An' now that you've sifted and searched me afore strangers, we'll talk about somethin' else, an' ye plase!"

So saying, Maureen rose to her feet with a brusqueness of manner that cut the dialogue short. The visitors, uneasily silent while it had lasted, now shuffled in their seats with relief. Con cleared his throat, and Nan clattered her chair closer to the hearth. Maureen drew a stool from the corner and sat down, leaning her back wearily against the ingle wall. Nan Lavelle, a good-humoured looking, rugged-faced young woman, in a bran-new green Coburg gown, was the first to speak.

"We come, Con an' me," said Nan, "to see if you'd go with us to the dance at Biddy Prendergast's. There's to be two pipers, no less, wan Tady Kelly, from Mayo side, forbye our own Paudeen; an' the two's to be at it hard an' fast for which has the best music. They say that this Tady has great waltzes an' gran' fashions, but Paudeen's the best warrant for the jig-tunes affer. An' there's to be tay

up in Biddy's new room, an' duckin' for apples, an' jumpin' at candles. Sorr a sich a turn-out ever you seen! You'll come, Maureen?"

At the beginning of this address, Maureen had changed colour quickly, and, seizing the tongs, had commenced a fresh attack on the fire. Now she answered readily:

"I thank you, Nan," she said, "for comin' so far out o' yer way for me; an' I'm obliged to yer brother, too. But I think I'll not stir out again to-night."

"Och now, Maureen, yer not in airnest; yer not goin' to spen' yer Hallow's Eve at the fireside yer lone. Sorr a wan o' you!"

"I'm goin' to my bed, by-an'-by," said Maureen. "I'm thinkin' it's the fittest place for me that's been workin' hard since four this mornin'."

"Ay, Maureen, you work too hard," said Con Lavelle, speaking for the first time, shading his eyes with a brawny hand, while he shot a glance of tenderness at her from under his massive rough-hewn brows.

Maureen flushed again as she felt the glance. "That's for my own judgment," she said, impatiently. "I'm young an' strong, an' if ever I'm to work it's now for sure; an' I thank you, Con!"

"But you'll come to the dance?" said Nan, coaxingly.

"No, Nan; I'll go to my bed."

"Well, if ever I seen or hard of such a girl!" said the sickly stepmother, fretfully. "Heavens above! when I was yer age there wasn't a dance in the island that I wouldn't be at. Come, none o' yer laziness, Maureen! Bed, indeed! I tell ye there's nothin' on airth for restin' young bones after a hard day's work like a good dance. Up with you, girl, an' put on yer shoes, an' take the cloak."

"Mother!" said Maureen, looking up in amazement, "don't bid me for to go to-night. You don't know what yer doin'!"

"But I do bid you for to go, an' if you gain-say me now, it'll be the first time in yer life. As for not knowin' what I'm doin', it's a quare speech, Maureen, an' wan I didn't expect from you. Be off with ye, now!"

"An' I'm to go, mother?"

"You're to go, an' be quick!"

"Then let it stan' so," said Maureen, rising up suddenly, and looking down at her step-mother with a queer expression on her face. "I'm doin' yer biddin', an' come good or come ill of it, ye must bear the burthen. I'll go."

Down to the room went Maureen, with a lighted candle in her hand, which she stuck in a sconce on the wall.

"I have striv'd an' I have wrought," muttered she, as with trembling hands she began to put on her grey worsted stockings, and the shoes that on Sundays and state occasions only, covered her nimble feet. "I have toiled for her, an' she never would give me my will as much as to the sayin' of I'll go, or I'll stay. Now I'm doin' her biddin', as I still have done it, an' if

ill comes out of it, let her look to it. I've hardened myself, an' I've hardened myself, but I'm not as hard as the rock yet. An' if I go at all, *seth* I'll go dacent, an' not be danced unher foot by the grandeur of Peggy Moran, with her genteel airs, an' her hoops, an' her five muslin flounces, stickin' out all round her, starched as stiff as the grass in a white frast. Oh——"

Here Maureen gave one desperate gasp of impatience to the thought of Peggy Moran, and struck her heel on the ground to drive it home in the unaccustomed shoe. Who should keep her from going to Biddy Prendergast's dance now? Not all the men in Bofin, armed to the death with shillelaghs.

She opened an old painted chest in the corner, and produced a gown. This gown had belonged to her own dead mother, and was the one piece of finery which Maureen possessed in the world. It was a grand chintz, with blue and gold-colour flowers on a chocolate ground, and fitted her figure to a nicety. This was quickly assumed, and her long amber hair rolled round her head in as smooth a wreath as its natural waviness would permit of. When this was done, a little cracked looking-glass over the hearth declared her toilet complete. Then she came back to the kitchen, and while Con Lavelle's admiring eyes devoured her from a shadowy corner, she served out their supper of potatoes to the children, and placed "the grain of tay" in a little brown teapot, burnt black, on the hearth within reach of her stepmother's hand. These things done, she put the key of the house in her pocket, and taking "the cloak," a family garment, she followed her friends out of the cabin into a calm moonlit night, which had replaced the gloomy twilight.

Biddy Prendergast's house was in the Middle Quarter village, a good walk from the Widow Lacey's. When Maureen and the Lavelles arrived at the festive scene, operations had already commenced. Screams of laughter greeted their entrance, from a crowd of boys and girls who were ducking for apples in a tub of water behind the door. The kitchen was lighted by a huge turf fire that roared up the reeking chimney. In the smoky rafters hens dozed, and nets dangled. Flitches of bacon and bunches of dried fish swung in the draught when the door was opened. Biddy Prendergast was a well-to-do woman, one of the island aristocrats. In the ingle nook two or three *collaighs*, anglicè crones, were toasting their knees and holding their chat, while the light leaped over their worn red petticoats and withered faces and hands. In a retired corner was Paudeen, the island piper, wrinkled and white-haired, sitting with his knowing eyes half closed, droning and tuning at his pipes, holding communion with them, as it were, rallying and inspiring all their energies for the coming struggle with the rival pipes and piper, who had come to dispute the palm for skilful harmonies with the Bofin instrument and the Bofin musician. Tady, the other performer, was "down in the room" at his tea. And "down to the room" went our party from the North Beach.

In this room a notable assemblage was convened. A long board, contrived by means of several small tables, was spread with tea, soda cakes, "crackers," and potato cakes, several pounds of butter in a large roll being placed in the centre on a dish. A bed, with blue checker curtains and patchwork counterpane, choked up one corner of the room, leaving no space for chairs. This difficulty was comfortably ignored by the guests sitting on the bed, and nursing their cups and platters on their knees. Those opposite were less fortunate, as the heels of their chairs were nearly treading on the hearth. All the élite of Bofin were here. There was Timothy Joyce, the national schoolmaster, about whose learning there were dark reports. It was whispered that he had a crack right across the top of his skull, occasioned by too reckless a prosecution of abstruse studies in his youth, and that this was why he wore his hair so long, and brushed so smooth and close above his forehead. There was Martin Leahy, the boat-maker, the ring of whose cheerful hammer on the beach, late and early, helped the larks and the striking oars in the harbour to make music all through the summer months. There was Mick Coyne Mack, the last name signifying "son," an Irish way of saying "junior." He was clerk in the chapel, a spare grizzled man, a great hand at praying and discoursing, a famous *voteen* (devotee), and almost as good at an argument as the schoolmaster himself. Then there was Tady, the strange piper, who having penetrated as far as Dublin and Belfast in the course of his scientific researches, and picked up odd polkas and operatic airs from hurdy-gurdys and German bands, was looked upon with much awe, as a superior professor of music. There was a young man, a cousin of an islander, who had just returned from America, with genteel clothes, a fine nasal twang in his speech, and plenty of anecdote about foreign lands. And though last, not least, there was the captain of a trading sail ship, that, on her way from Spain to Liverpool, had been driven out of her course and taken refuge in Bofin harbour.

Biddy Prendergast, a plain-faced woman in a grand dress cap and plaid gown, was making tea at the head of her board, in high spirits. She was talking volubly, joking and laughing at Mike Tiernay, who with a huge black kettle in hand was replenishing her earthen teapot. Every now and again she winked at Peggy Moran, who sat close by, with her back to the fire, in all the glory of the five muslin flounces, a knot of red ribbons blazing under her chin, and her great black eyes dancing responsive to Biddy's winks, or falling demurely on her teacup when handsome Mike looked her way. Not a doubt but Mike was the best-looking man in the house, tall, and manly, and bronzed; with his coaxing voice, and his roguish smile, and his frank way of tossing the dark curls from his forehead by a fling of his head. Peggy, the belle, had long desired to count him on the list of her admirers. Peggy had three cows and two feather-beds to her dower;

the finest fortune in Bofin. Biddy, through pure good will to Mike, her favourite, was trying to make a match between him and the heiress. This unknown to the elder Morans, who would sooner have seen their daughter mistress of Con Lavelle's fine farm at Fawnmore. Biddy's hints and Peggy's handsome eyes had until to-night remained unheeded. Now there was a sudden change. Mike was remarkably civil to both of these ladies. He tucked Peggy's flounces carefully away from the fire, and helped her twice to crackers. Peggy dimpled and blushed, and Biddy laughed and winked, and Mike was in the act of pouring the water and the teapot, when the door was pushed open into Maureen and her friends came in.

A scream from Biddy greeted their entrance. "Bad manners to it for a kittle!" cried Mike, getting very red in the face. "Is the finger scalded off o' you entirely? Sure if it is I'll put a ring on it for a plaster, an' if that doesn't mend it, sorra more can I do."

The finger was suitably bound and bemoaned, and Biddy pardoned the offender, forgot her pains like a heroine, and attended to her new guests.

"Come down, Con, come down, man, here's a sate by the fire. The night's could. Good luck to ye, Nan, hang yer cloak on the door there, an' come down an' ate a bit o' somethin'. Yer welcome, Maureen Lacey! Make room, girls, an' let her come down. It's seldom we get you to come out. An' how's the rumbatics with yer mother?"

Con Lavelle being an important man, the richest farmer in the island, was soon forced into a seat by the fire, and he and his sister had their wants quickly attended to. Maureen, who was looked on by the hostess as rather an interloper, was not so eagerly noticed. Maureen felt this with a swelling heart. The next moment Mike had shouldered his way to her, had cleared a place for her on the bed, and taken his seat beside her, just at the corner, where he could draw back his head behind the looping of the curtain, and look at her proud downcast face as much as he pleased. Maureen, with a huge cup and saucer in her hands, trembled so, that she spilled the tea all over her grand chintz gown. Sitting there opposite to Peggy Moran's jealous eyes, with Mike leal and true beside her, Maureen struggled in the toils of the temptation to turn round and smile in his face, and ask him to hand her a piece of cake. She knew that Mike was thinking of her last words to him on the bog, knew it by his jubilant air, and the fire from his eyes that shone on her from behind the looping of the curtain. The temptation fought within her to let him have it his own way. In the whirling vision of a second she saw herself Mike's wife, mistress of a snug little shelter at the East End, making ready the hearth for Mike coming home from his fishing. No more drenching in the high spring tides, battling with storm and rain, carrying home the sea-rack on angry midnights. No more long days of labour

in the fields of strangers for the wretched earning of sixpence a day. No more lecturings from a fretful stepmother, but always these strong hands beside her, and always these tender eyes. O, for Mike she could gladly work, with him could starve if need be. These things strove within Maureen as she sat spilling her tea over her grand chintz gown. But the old strain of duty, of pity for those depending on her, of fidelity to her promise to her stepmother, still kept its echo sounding in her ears, though but dimly and from afar off. The temptation shook her; but when the gust allayed itself, she regained her vantage ground, breathless, but sure of foot. The habit of restraint was strong within her. She did not turn and smile on Mike; neither did she ask him for a piece of cake.

Peggy Moran, sitting with her back to the fire, was beginning to get very red in the face. Biddy Prendergast's wit had fallen dead. There was no one to tuck Peggy's flounces away from the blaze, nor to hold the kettle gallantly for Biddy. Maureen sitting there, filling the moments for herself with the intense vitality of her own hard struggle, was looked upon by her two female neighbours as an unpardonable poacher on their promising preserves. But tea was over now, and the two pipers were sending forth rival squeaks and groans in the kitchen. Young feet were restless, and old feet too. The "room" was deserted, and the dancing began with spirit.

Maureen had made one gallant struggle, but it was hard to be proof against all the enchantments of this most trying night. When Mike, whom many glancing eyes coveted for a partner, eagerly pressed her for the first dance, her customary short reply was not ready; and she found herself up on the floor by his side before she had time to think about it. As for Mike, he was wild with spirits. He saw Maureen's conduct in the light in which she knew he would see it. He thought she had relented at last, and made up her mind to smile on him for the future. By-and-by Maureen caught the spirit of the dance; panting and smiling, she tripped it with the nimblest amongst them. Everything began to slip away but the intense delight of the moment. Blushing rosy red, her eyes sparkling, her hair shining and shaking out in little gleaming rings about her forehead, her face developed a radiant beauty that hardly seemed to belong to the grave Maureen. An overheard whisper from some one to another—"Lord! such a handsome slip as that girl of poor Lacey's is growin'," did not tend to sober this hour of elation. Who will not thrill at praise, especially if it comes at the moment when one is under the eye whose apple one fain would be? The flush of conscious youth, and health, and beauty, glowed on Maureen's cheek. All the sunny ardour of her Irish nature, so long kept under, the smouldering love, the keen relish for harmless pleasure, the laughter-loving enjoyment of wit and humour, burst forth from within her for this one glorious evening, and

flushed in her beautiful face, and made music in the beat of her brogues on the earthen floor.

Peggy Moran and the young man from America with whom she consoled herself, tried to get up one genteel round of the Copenhagen Waltz. This being finished, Pauden the piper asked Maureen, in compliment to her dancing, to tell him her favourite tune. Whereupon Maureen, with a sly laugh in her eyes, asked for The Little House under the Hill. This was Pauden's greatest tune, and at it he went with the will of a giant, his white hair shaking, his wrinkled cheeks bursting, and his one leg with its blue-ribbed stocking and brogue, hopping up and down under his pipes with might and enthusiasm. How he shrieked and shrieked it, how he groaned and wheezed it, and how all the company joined in at last and danced it! How it was stamped, and shuffled, how the deafening clatter of feet, and the "whoops!" and "hurroos!" rose up to Biddy Prendergast's smoky rafters and wakened the hens, and set them a clucking, and how Tady, the vanquished professor, sat sad in the corner and mused on the primitive state of uncivilisation in which these benighted Bofiners were plunged! There was only one other who did not join in the dance, and who stood with his long loose figure drawn up against the wall in a corner, his wistful eyes searching the crowd of bobbing heads for the occasional glimpse of one face. Con Lavelle was full of uneasiness. Only once had he smiled to-night, and that was when the Liverpool captain (who, ignorant of Irish jigs and their mysteries, had until now kept him company in his corner) had delivered his weighty opinion that Maureen Lacey was the best dancer, and the prettiest girl in the house. But the captain had caught the contagion at last and joined the crowd, and Con Lavelle was alone.

After this jig was over, the house being literally "too hot to hold" the dancers, they turned out in couples, some to go home, others only to cool themselves in the moonlight, and return. Of these latter were Mike Tiernay and Maureen Lacey. Under the shelter of Biddy's gable wall Mike got leave at last to "speak" all he had tried to say so often, and Maureen cut him short with no cross answers. He told his news, and he "axed" his question.

CHAPTER II.

THE next night a yellow moon hung high over Bofin, gilding the spars of the Liverpool trader, rocking still in the harbour. The headlands lay like good-natured giants smiling in their dreams. An ocean of silver glimmered out of the obscurity of space and kissed their feet. Along the road to the North Beach a man was plodding with a parcel under his arm. There were few in the island who would walk abroad, alone, once the night had set in, for the spiritual population of Bofin is said to outnumber those who are counted in flesh and blood, and the night is the elfin day. Men and women shut themselves into their cabins at twilight and love not solitary walks. But Con Lavelle was one of the few.

It is customary to bring a friend for support upon the mission on which he was bent. Con had his reasons for going alone. His expedition was a forlorn one. Why should another behold his defeat?

Con Lavelle had loved Maureen Lacey long. Last night had shown him that if his chance were not speedily improved, it would very quickly become nothing. The Widow Lacey smiled on him, he knew, for she reckoned on Con's soft nature and Con's good farm to help her out of many of her difficulties. This was little, however, while Maureen was cold. Last night he had seen her melt and brighten, and though the change, he knew, had not been wrought by him, his heart had so ached at her unwonted beauty, that he could not, like a wise man, turn his face the other way and think of her no more. No, he would have his chance out. He would offer her his love, and if she would not have that, he would bribe her with his comfortable house, his goodly land, and help and protection for her family. If Maureen could not give him her love, he would grieve; but, if Maureen could be bought, he would buy her.

This was the state of Con's mind when he lifted the Lacey's latch. As ever, the place was lighted by the fire, and there was an air of hush and tidiness within that betokened expectation of something unusual. The children were all in bed, the house was swept, the bits of tins and crockeries were all straight on the humble dresser, the few rude chairs were ranged with precision along by the walls. Maureen's stepmother was dozing in her little straw chair in the warmest corner. It was not in her veins that the fever burned which had caused this spell of prostration. Maureen stood on the hearth, in her work-a-day crimson petticoat and loose bodice of print, with the blaze playing over her pretty bare feet, not yet spoiled by exposure, and deepening the heated spots on her cheeks, and gilding the wilful ripples of hair that would creep out and keep straying about her forehead. Twice Maureen had slipped "down to the room," and pressed her face to the one little pane of the window, and peered forth at the night without, where the yellow moonlight fell rich and flat on the rugged causeway, and the silver Atlantic shifted and glimmered between the grey stone walls of the neighbouring cabins. And the last time she had withdrawn her face with a gesture of impatient dismay. This was not the shape she wanted to see, this loose swinging figure coming along with its awkward shadow.

Con lifted the latch and came in. The noise wakened the widow, who hailed him with glad surprise. "What can bring him to-night again?" flashed through the minds of both the women, followed also by the same surmise, only the latter was with one a hope, with the other a fear. Maureen's "Save ye, Con!" was only a feeble echo of her stepmother's greeting, wrung from her by the absolute requirements of hospitality. Curiosity was quickly allayed, and

hope and fear confirmed. Advancing to the dresser with a sheepish air, the visitor set down a bottle of whisky, pipes, and tobacco. Thus his errand was at once declared. Con Lavelle had come "match-making."

The stepmother rubbed her wasted hands with delight. "You're welcome, Con, agra, machree!" she said. "Maureen, set out the table, an' fetch the glasses, an' fill the pipes."

Maureen did as she was bidden, uncorked the bottle, and handed the glass and kindled pipe to her mother, all with a set defiance on her face, which did not escape the timorous suitor.

"Ye'll be come on business, Con?" began the widow.

"Ay," said Con, blushing and fidgeting. "I come, Mrs. Lacey, to ask yer daughter for a wife. God sees I'll make her as good a husband as ever laid all he had in a girl's lap an' only axed for herself in return."

"It's throu for you, Con dear," said the stepmother. "Oh, an' ye have her with my heart's best wish. Come down, Maureen, and give yer han' to yer husband."

Maureen had been standing, pale, over in the shadows, at the dresser. Now she moved down to the hearth. "Not my husband," she said, "an' niver my husband. In my heart I'm thankful to ye, Con Lavelle, for thinkin' kindly of a poor girl like me, but I cannot take yer offer."

"Good Lord, sich talk!" cried the widow, enraged. "Don't mind her, Con, asthore, it's only a way girls has, likin' to keep themsel's high, an' small blame to them! She'll be yours, niver fear, an' willin' an' pleased on her weddin'-day."

"Mother," said Maureen, "where's the use of talkin' this ways? Yer not my God, nor my Maker, that ye have a right to han' over my soul an' body to this man or that man again my will. An' you, Con Lavelle, yer a decent man, an' ye wouldn't be for takin' a girl to yer wife that had her heart set in wan that wasn't you. I'm a pledged wife, an' as good as a wife this minit in the eyes o' the Almighty above; an' thrue an' fast I'll stan' to my word, so help me Christ, my Saviour!"

Slowly, and with a stern reverence in her tone, Maureen uttered these last words, her eyes on the ground and her hands squeezed together. Con hung his head and hoped no more, and the stepmother rocked herself to and fro in her feebleness, and raged with disappointment.

"You bould hizzy," she cried. "Oh, you bould shameless hizzy, that's been decavin' me all this time! Goin' jiggin' to yer dances an' makin' yer matches, an' throwin' dust in the eyes o' the poor sickly mother at home. Oh, you bad onnalna daughter!"

"Aisy, aisy, Mrs. Lacey," put in soft-hearted Con. "Throth I'll not listen to that from ye. If Maureen cannot like me, I'll tell the thruth o' her. She's the good hard-workin' daughter to you, whatever!"

"Hould yer tongue!" shrieked the passionate

woman. "What do you know about it? Throth ye take yer answer kindly. It's always the likes o' a soft fool like you that gets tumbled in the mud while the world's goin' roun'. Oh, wirra, wirra, that iver I should rear sich a daughter!"

Maureen stepped up to Con and put out her hand. "I thank ye," she said, eagerly, "for puttin' in that kind word for me. I have thried to do her biddin', an' God sees it's her own fault that it's come to this so soon. I'm rale grateful to ye, Con, an' if I could make two women o' mysel', wan o' me should be yer wife. Bein' only wan, I must go aferher my heart."

Big tears swelled up in Con's eyes as he shook her hand and let it drop. "It's threue for you, Maureen," was all he said.

"Oh!" cried the stepmother, fiercely—"oh! if I could just get my tongue about that limb o' the devil Mike Tiernay—"

"God save all here!" said a hearty voice, as the latch was lifted, and Mike himself stood amongst them. Maureen, blushing, fell back into the shadows and left the battle to him.

"Lend us yer arm, Con," cried the stepmother, trying to stand. "Begone!" she shrieked, shaking her puny fist at Mike, "be gone from my house, you thief, you beggar!"

"Throth, yer not well, Mrs. Lacey dear," said Mike, "yer not well at all. An' it's Con's fault here for givin' you too strhong a taste o' this fine whisky o' his, an' you so wake about the head. Sit down now, Mrs. Lacey, asthore, an' rest yersel' a bit," he went on coaxingly, slipping her hand from Con's arm, settling her in her chair, and drawing a seat confidentially beside her. "An' feth ye may make yer mind aisy about thieves an' beggars, for there isn't a soul o' such a crew in the house at all: sorra wan; nor out bye neither, for the moon's as bright as daylight, an' I couldn't miss but see them if they were there."

All this was poured forth in Mike's own rolling, coaxing, devil-may-care tone, completely drowning any attempt of the widow's to finish her interrupted volley of abuse. She sat grasping the sides of her chair in silence, and mentally scratching his face.

"Oh, the inperence of ye!" she hissed between her teeth, at last, "to think to come round me with yer blarney. I know yer errand—"

"You do, Mrs. Lacey?" said Mike, "you know that Maureen—" here his eyes deepened and flashed, and a ruddy smile overspread his brave face as he glanced at a shadowy corner opposite, "that Maureen has promised me her own sel' for a wife gin this day year when I come home from my voyage? Ye've hard of the strhange vessel that's been lyin' below all week. Well, the captain is a daeent man, an' he's offered to take me with him in his ship, an' promised to put me in a way of arnin' in a year as much money as 'll do all I'll want it to do. On this day twel'month I'll come back a well-to-do man, plase God, an' I'll buy the best

holdin' in Bofin, save an' exceptin' Con Lavelle's here. Maureen has give me her word to wait for me. An' that's my errand, to tell ye all this that's arranged betwix us."

This information of Mike's threw a light on the widow's perplexity, and the storminess of her wrath became somewhat calmed.

"Ye'll never come back," she said, with a sneer, "wanst yer off out o' Bofin with yer blarneyin' tongue an' yer rovin' ways, sorra fut will ye iver set in it again."

"Don't say that, Mrs. Lacey," said Mike, gravely. "You mustn't say that, an' me ready to swear the contrairy."

"Ay," she sneered again; "the likes o' ye'll swear to anything; but who'll heed ye? I say it would be better for Maureen to take up at wanst with a daeent man like Con Lavelle there, sitting peaceable at home on his farm, than to be waitin' for years till a rover like you takes the notion to turn up again from the other end o' the world. Which ye never will."

"Well, Mrs. Lacey," said Mike, drawing himself up, and speaking solemnly, "I'll give Maureen her lave, full and free, to marry Con Lavelle come this day year, if I be not here to claim her first mysel'."

"Ay," said Maureen, looking suddenly out from the shadows; "an' I'll give my word full an' free to marry Con Lavelle come this day year, if Mike be not here to claim me first."

"Ye'll swear that?" said the stepmother.

"Ay, we'll swear it both if you like," said Mike, smiling proudly down on Maureen.

"He's ready enough to han' you over, Maureen," said the widow, with another of her sneers. "Ye'll be 'feared to do the same by him, I'm thinkin'."

Maureen made no reply, but, slipping her hand out of Mike's, went over to the dresser and reached up for something, to a little cracked cup on the shelf.

"Here's two rings," she said, coming back to the hearth, "wan I got on the last fair day, an' the other I got last night in Biddy Prendergast's cake. There's for you, Con, an' there's for you, Mike. Wan o' you men 'll put wan o' them rings on my finger come this day year; Con, if I'm left for him, Mike, if he's home in time. This I swear, mother, in spite o' yer tants, an' by the Blessed Vargin I'll keep my oath!"

A silence fell on the group. The blaze of the fire dropped down, and a shadow covered the hearth. A momentary cloud passed over Mike's proud face in the flush of its rash happy confidence. Was it a whispered reminder of the perils that beset the sailor abroad on the seas—of storms, of great calms, of ships drifted out of their tracks? But Mike was not one to fret his mind about shadows.

"Ye'll dhrink to that, all round?" said Con Lavelle, presently.

"Ay, we'll dhrink to 't," said Mike, gaily; and Maureen mending the fire, a jovial glow lit up the house once more.

Con Lavelle had become a different man within the last few minutes. His dejected face

was kindled, and his brawny hand shook as he poured the whisky into the glasses.

"Here's to Maureen's happy weddin' on this day year!" he said, knocking the glass against his teeth as he raised the spirit to his lips. "Amen, amen," went round in reply, and matters being thus concluded, the two men presently took their leave, and quitted the cabin together.

"Look ye here, Mike Tiernay," said Con Lavelle, stopping short, as the two walked along in the moonlight, "I'll give you wan warnin' afore I part ye. I have loved Maureen Lacey since iver she was able to toddle. Seein' she liked ye the best, I would not have made nor meddil't betune ye. But with yer own, an' her own free will, she took an' oath to-night, afore my face, an' mind I'll make her stick to her bargain. Look to 't well, an' come home for yer wife in time, for sorra day, nor hour, nor minit o' grace will I give you, if so it falls out that ye fail her!"

Mike Tiernay drew up his towering figure, and looked contemptuously into the feverish face of his rival.

"When yer axed for day, or hour, or minit o' grace, Con Lavelle," he said, "then come an' give me yer warnin's. Ye may wish me what evil ye please, but the Almighty himself will blow the blast that'll bring me o'er the seas to make ruin o' yer evil hopes. I'm lavin' my wife in His hands, an' heed me, man, ye shall niver touch her!"

Shame fell on Con for a moment, and his better nature was touched.

"I do not wish ye evil, Mike Tiernay," he said, sulkily, "but only to have my chance."

CHAPTER III.

MAUREEN'S year of trial began in peace. Her stepmother's tongue was less harsh than usual, and Con Lavelle had left her untroubled. There was a light in her eye as she faced the blast of a morning, and a pride in her step as she moved through the house, that bade defiance to all external powers to make her less happy and blest than she was. She repaid her mother's forbearance with extra care and exertion. Hard work was play to her now. Christmas season was Midsummer-time. Whistling winds were but music to dance to, and pelting rains like the light May dew. All the frost of her nature was thawed. She laughed with the children at supper-time, and told them stories when her work was done. Her eyes were brighter, and her lips more softly curled. Her words to all were less scant than they had been, and the tone of her voice sweeter. Her days went quickly past, because every task that she wrought, and every hour that she filled, brought her nearer to next Hallow Eve. Her trust in Mike was as whole as her trust in God.

So the winter passed, and the months of early spring, and then this happy phase of her life wore, bit by bit, away. The widow began to sigh, and cast up her eyes when Mike was mentioned, and Con Lavelle to come dropping

in in the lengthening evenings to smoke his pipe, and to question Mrs. Lacey concerning her "rumatics." Maureen pretended to take no notice, only went to bed earlier of nights to be out of the way, gave shorter answers when spoken to, and began to creep gradually back again into her old reserved self. This went on for a time, and then the stepmother began to speak openly of Mike as a deserter, sneering at Maureen for putting her faith in him, or congratulating her on having won a thrifty man like Con Lavelle. Still Maureen endured, going steadily on with her work, never seeming to hear what was said, nor to see what was meant.

Presently Con Lavelle began to change his demeanour; growing regular and systematic in his attentions; sending boys to eat her turf and carry her rack, and do odd rough jobs for her by stealth. Her stern rejection of these real services made very little difference to Con, who went steadily on laying siege to her gratitude in a number of subtle ways. The stepmother grew more sickly; and how could Maureen, who had little to give her, turn Nan Lavelle from the door, when she came smiling in of an evening with a nice fat chicken under her cloak, or a morsel of mutton for broth? Or how could she throw in the fire the gay new nappikeen bought on the last fair day, which the widow wore tied on her head, and which Con had not dared to present to Maureen? Con was not bold, but sly. He did nothing that Maureen could resent, but he kept her in constant remembrance of her promise. Often, as he smoked his pipe at his farm-house door at sunset, he would slip out a little brass ring from his pocket, twirl it on the top of his own huge finger, and smile at the vacant Atlantic, lying sailless and sunny before him. Why should Mike Tiernay return?

So the year went on, and October came round again. There was much speculation in the island as to how it would go with Maureen Lacey. Some vowed that Mike would be true to his time, and others that Maureen ought to bless her stars that would leave her to Con Lavelle. Of Maureen herself the gossips could make little. "He'll come," was all she would say in answer to hints and inquiries. As the end of the month drew near, public excitement ran high. Men made bets, and kind-hearted women said prayers for Maureen. Con Lavelle went about his farm with feverish eyes and a restless foot, whilst in-doors Nan already made rare preparations. At the North Beach the stepmother chattered incessantly about the wedding, and her pride that a daughter of hers should be mistress of Fawnmore Farm. As the days narrowed in about her, Maureen struggled hard to go and come like one who was deaf and blind. She made ready her humble trousseau, knitting her new grey stockings, and stitching her new blue cloak, bending her sharpened face over her work, contradicting no one, and questioning no one. Neighbours who chanced to meet the flash of her eye went away crossing themselves. People began to feel afraid of Maureen Lacey.

At last Hallow Eve arrived. Biddy Prendergast gave another of her dances, and Peggy Moran figured at it as the bride of the young man from America, on whom she had bestowed herself, her three cows, and her two feather-beds. But Con Lavelle and his sister Nan were busy at home, making ready for that wedding of the morrow which was the subject of eager discussion at Biddy's tea-table to-night. The wedding feast was to be spread at Fawnmore, and many guests had been invited.

It was a rough wild night. If the Bofins were less hardy a race, or if the storm had commenced in its violence an hour or two earlier, Biddy Prendergast must have had few guests at her dance that Hallow Eve. About eight o'clock Nan Lavelle was bending over her pot-oven inspecting the browning of her cakes, and Con was nailing up a fine new curtain on the kitchen window to make the place look more snug than usual. The wind bellowed down the chimney, and its thunders overhead drowned the noise of the hammer and the sound of some one knocking for admittance outside. Suddenly the door was pushed open, and Maureen Lacey came whirling breathless over the threshold, with the storm driving in like a troop of fiends let loose after her heels. Her face was white and streaked with rain; her dripping hair and the soaked hood of her cloak were dragged back from her head upon her shoulders. She tried to close the door behind her, but could not, and the yelling wind kept pouring in, dashing everything about the kitchen as though the place were invaded by an army of devils.

"God save us!" cried Nan, dropping her knife, and rushing to shut the door.

"Maureen!" said Con, with a blaze of surprise on his face, coming eagerly to meet her, and attempting to draw the wet cloak from her shoulders. "If ye had any word to say to me, asthore, ye might have sent wan o' the childher airly an' let me know. I'd have walked twenty mile for yer biddin' forbye wan, an' the night was ten times worse than it is."

Maureen shook off his touch with a shudder, and retreated a step or two.

"I haven't much to say," she said hoarsely, "only this. What time o' day have ye settit for to-morra?"

"Ten o'clock," said Con, sullenly, his glow all extinguished, and his face dark.

"Ten!" echoed Maureen. "O, Con," she cried, clasping her hands, and raising her wild eyes to his face in a pitiful appeal, "O, Con, make it twelve!"

Con glanced at her and cast his eyes on the ground in dogged shame. "Let it be twelve, thin," he said. "I cannot stan' yer white face, though the same white face might harden a man, seein' what's to happen so soon. This much I'll grant ye, but ye needn't ax no more. I have stood my chance fair an' honest, an' I'll not let ye off with yer bargain."

Maureen's supplicating face, at this, was crossed by a change that made the bridegroom start.

"*Yom* let me off!" she said, scornfully. "If you, or any man or mortal had it in their power to let me off, I wouldn't be comin' prayin' to ye here to-night. But I swore an oath to my God, an' to Him I must answer for 't. An' that was the rash swearin' when death wasn't put in the bargain. For mind ye, Con Lavelle, there's nothin' on land or sea, but death only, 'll bring me to yer side to-morra in yondher chapel. Whisht!" she said, as a long thundering gust roared over the roof, "there's death abroad to-night. Las' night I saw a ship comin' sailin', sailin', an' somebody wavin', wavin', an' a big wave rolled over the ship, an' thin there rose wan screech. I woke up, an' there was the storrum keenin', keenin'—Nan Lavelle, will ye give me a mouthful o' could wather?"

She drank the draught eagerly, and then she gathered her wet cloak around her.

"Thank ye," she said. "I'll be goin' now. Good night to ye." Con wakened out of his black reverie and sprang to the door. "Maureen!" he cried, grasping her cloak to detain her. "Ye dar not go out yer lone in the rage o' yon wind. Stop a bit, an'—"

"Let me go!" said Maureen, fiercely, shaking him off. "You'd better let me go, for I will not answer for all my doin's this night."

Her hands were wrenching at the bar, and the door flew open as she spoke. Again the blast poured in with its frightful gambols. Con Lavelle and his sister fell back, and Maureen's white face vanished in the darkness. Nan Lavelle made fast the door again, and returned to her pot-oven with a weight upon her heart. Thoroughly matter of fact as was this young woman, it did not occur to her now for the first time that to-morrow's wedding would be an ill-omened event. There was an hour of silence between the brother and sister, and then Nan cried, aghast, as the crashing overhead arose to a horrible pitch:

"God keep us, Con! it's throue what Maureen said. There'll be death abroad afore mornin'!"

"Ay!" muttered Con, as he stalked restlessly up and down with his hands in his pockets. "But it's throue as well what she said forbye—they did not put death in the bargain. Dead or alive, if he beant here, 'fore Heaven I'll have my rights!"

The people of Bofin are accustomed to storms. The tempest is their lullaby, their alarm, their burly friend, or their treacherous enemy. It rocks the cradle when they are born, rings the knell when they die, and keens over them in their graves. When there is no storm the world seems to come to a stand-still. Yet the oldest islander cannot recollect so awful a night as this eve of Maureen's wedding. Few will understand all that this means, for few could imagine the terrors of a Bofin hurricane; how the sad barren island is scourged by its devastating rage; how the shrill cries of drowning hundreds come ringing through its smothering clamour; how the tigerish Atlantic rushes hungrily over its cliffs, roaring "Wrecks! wrecks!" and goes hissing back again to do its deed of destruction.

A night like this brings spoils to the island shores, and many are abroad, looking right and left, by break of day. On this particular morning, at early dawn, two men were hurrying along the north-east headlands. The might of the storm had subsided, and the black night was blanching to a pallid grey. Streaks of purple and green rode over the seething ocean, tinting the foam of the tossing surges, whose blinding wreaths thickened the air like angry snow-drifts. Now rosy bars began blushing out from the eastward, glowing and spreading till they looked like the trail of fiery wings—the fiery wings of the Angel of Death, passing in again at the gates of heaven. Coming along in this splendid dawn, the two men saw a female figure hastening as if to meet them.

It was Maureen in her wedding-gown and her wedding-cloak, with a new azure kerchief tied over her pretty gold hair. Her face was turned to the sea, and the men saw only the rim of her thin white cheek as she passed them by without seeming to see them.

"Presarve us!" said one; "she's ready for her weddin' airly. Where is she boun' for at this hour do ye think?"

"God knows!" said the other. "I niver seen a sowl got so wild-like. If I was Con Lavelle I would wash my han's o' her."

"Sorra fears o' Con doin' any sich thing!" laughed the other. "But where ondher heaven is she gettin' out to now? Mother o' marcy! it's not goin' to dhrownd herself she is?"

The men were still on the headlands, but Maureen had descended to the beach. Ploughing her way through the wet slippery shingle, she had gained a line of low rocks, on which the surf was dashing, and she was now clambering on hands and knees to reach the top of the furthest and most difficult of the chain yet bared.

"Och, it's lookin' for Mike she is, poor girl!" said one of the men, "an' feth, she may save herself the trouble. The safest ship that iver he sailed in wouldn't carry him within miles o' Bofin last night. Whisht! what's yon black thing out far there agin the sky? Show us yer glass."

The other produced an old battered smuggler's telescope, and, turn about, they peered long and steadily out to sea.

"Oh, throth it's a wreck!" said the one.

"Ay, feth!" said the other.

"Well!" said the first, "God rest the poor sows that are gone to their reek'nin', but it's an ill win' that blows nobody good. There'll be many's the bit of a thing washin' in afore nightfall. Maureen!" he cried out, suddenly, raising his voice to a roar. "My God! I was feared she was mad. Maureen!"

A long unearthly cry was the answer, ringing through the dawn. Maureen had been crouching on her knees, dangerously bending to the foam, as if searching under the curve of each breaker as it crashed up and split its boiling

froth upon the rock. Now she rose up with her terrific cry, and, throwing her arms wildly over her head, leaped into the sea and disappeared.

Running swiftly down the headlands, the men gained the beach, and there they saw Maureen, not floating out to sea upon the waves, but standing battling with them, up to her waist in the seething foam, clinging with one hand to the rock beside her, and with the other tugging in desperation at something dark and heavy that rose and sank with the swelling and rebounding of the tide. Dashing into the water, the men were quickly at her side.

"It is Mike!" gasped Maureen, half blinded, half choking with the surf. "Bring him in!"

They loosened her fingers from that dark heavy something, and found that, indeed, it was the body of a man. They laid him on the beach, drew the hair from his face, and recognised their old comrade, Mike Tiernay. Maureen uttered no more wild cries. She took the cloak from her shoulders and spread it up to his chin. She put her hand into his bosom, found the ring she had given him attached round his neck by a string, and slipped it at once upon her finger. Then she sat down and laid his head upon her knee.

"Will you go," she said, calmly, to the men, "and tell Con Lavelle that Mike Tiernay has come home? Will ye tell him?" she added, holding up her hand—"will ye tell him Maureen Lacey has a ring upon her finger?"

And this was all the wedding that Bofin saw that day.

But little further of Maureen Lacey is known to the writer of this history. The wreck of the ship in which Mike had been returning was one of those disasters whose details fill the daily newspapers in winter-time. Sewn in the poor fellow's jacket was found a note for a good little sum of money. The following year a fever visited the island, sweeping off, amongst others, Maureen's stepmother, and all her children but one. After this, Maureen sold all their worldly goods, and departed for America with her little brother in her arms.

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